OFFICIAL U.S. PlayStation MAGAZINE

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Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine Issue 92 (May 2005)

BURNOUT 4

CAN CRITERION IMPROVE ON 2004'S GAME OF THE YEAR?

MAY 2005 ISSUE 92
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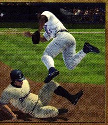
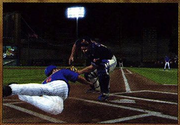
MLB 2006
Nothing is more true to the game





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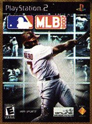
PlayStation 2
MLB 2006

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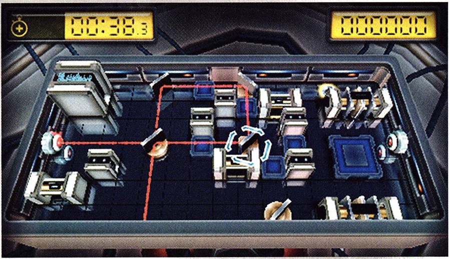
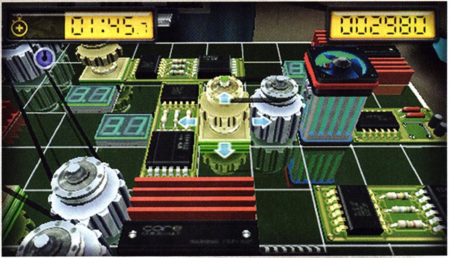
TIME IS RUNNING OUT
CAN YOU SAVE THE WORLD?



Your PSP™ handheld entertainment system is the bomb! Diffuse bombs by solving puzzles and save the world from terrorist threats.

Enjoy head-to-head multiplayer for up to 4 players via the PSP's wireless connectivity. Find out who the real bomb expert is!



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Violence
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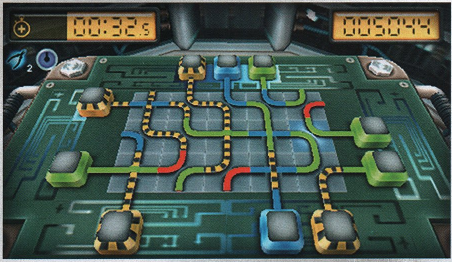
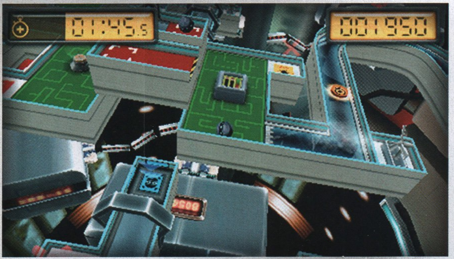


Not just another puzzle game! Smart Bomb is a 3-D puzzle game that features over 150 different puzzles to test your control and mental skills.

Social gaming with numerous Multi-Player modes including Story Mode, Arcade Mode, Challenge Mode and Special Mode!



The World is under threat from a crazed bomber who has set up an intricate network of bombs across the Globe. As part of a specialized Bomb Disposal Unit, it is up to you to diffuse the threat.

TIME IS RUNNING OUT.
Can you save the world?

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M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Blood
Intense Violence
Sexual Themes
Strong Language

PC
CD-ROM
SOFTWARE

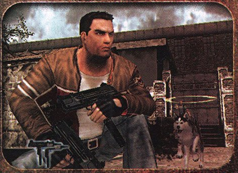
PlayStation 2

XBOX

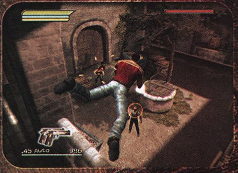
Dead to Rights II

LIE DOWN.
PLAY DEAD.
GOOD BOY.

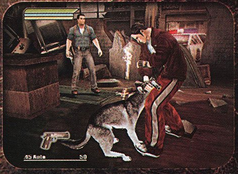
If it's true that time heals all wounds, Jack Slate's about to peel back the scabs. In this prequel to the hit 3rd-person shooter, Grant City's finest returns with nastier disarms, spherical slow-motion dives and, of course, his best friend, Shadow. Together, they're crime's worst nightmare.



DRAW FROM A MASSIVE ARSENAL OF WEAPONS.



TARGET MULTIPLE ENEMIES IN MID-AIR.



COMMAND SHADOW IN REAL TIME.

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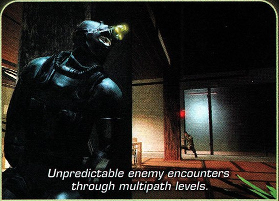
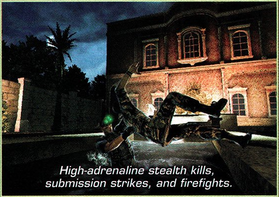
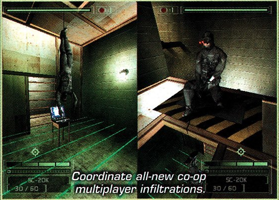
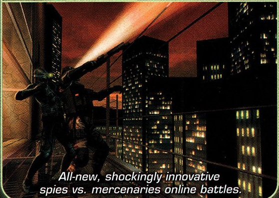

Unpredictable enemy encounters through multipath levels.


High-adrenaline stealth kills, submission strikes, and firefights.



Coordinate all-new co-op multiplayer infiltrations.


All-new, shockingly innovative spies vs. mercenaries online battles.

What if an algorithm could crash the stock markets, black out New York, and hijack ballistic missiles? **This is 2007. This is reality.** The one programmer who has the key to this algorithm has vanished. Find him at any cost. Bring the battle closer to the enemy - bring it to their soil before the chain of chaos becomes unstoppable. You are Sam Fisher. You are a Splinter Cell.

BRING THE BATTLE CLOSER. NOW!

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Strong Language
Violence

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PlayStation 2

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Tom Clancy's
SPLINTER CELL
CHAOS THEORY
Amon Tobin
Chaos Theory
Soundtrack composed by Amon Tobin
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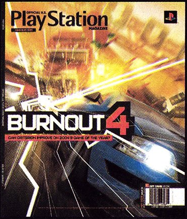
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BURNOUT 4
CAN CRITERION IMPROVE ON 2004'S GAME OF THE YEAR?

COVER STORY BURNOUT 4

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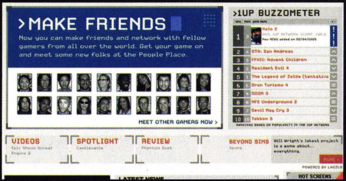
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Now you can make friends and network with fellow gamers from all over the world. Get your game on and meet some new folks at the People Place.

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>1UP BUZZOMETER

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RANKINGS BASED ON POPULARITY IN THE 1UP NETWORK

VIDEOS Epic Shows Unreal Engine 3

SPOTLIGHT Castlevania

REVIEW Phantom Dust

BEYOND SIMS Spore

Will Wright's latest project is a game about... everything.

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THE GOOD KIND OF BURNOUT...

ELECTRONIC ARTS AND CRITERION "GET" RACING

When *Burnout 3* drove into our lives last year, it seemed like it was the first time anyone had heard of the franchise. "Wow, those graphics, the awesome sense of speed—and the crashes—holy...!" My own reaction was admittedly over the top: "Greatest racing game ever!," I gushed. It popped up on everyone's best games lists and was *OPM*'s Game of the Year.

So why the sudden burst of love for *Burnout*? The original game released in 2001 and *Burnout 2* followed in 2003. Yet neither seemed to carry the impact of the third, despite being critical hits and from the same developer.

The difference? New management. While EA purchased Criterion mainly for RenderWare, EA's handling of *Burnout 3* serves as testimony to the company's marketing prowess. The series' original publisher, now-defunct Acclaim, never had the muscle or, perhaps, inspiration to support *Burnout* properly. How many other games suffer from lack of notice just because the publisher doesn't "get it"? Read Dana's excellent feature on *Burnout 4* and find out what's behind one of the greatest racing games ever. « *Tom Byron*

THE OPM FAMILY

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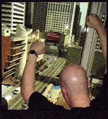
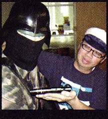
DANA JONGEWAARD was so inspired by what she saw of *Burnout 4* that afterward she talked her driver into letting her take the wheel. Sadly, her fab multilevel crash was thwarted by an immediate fender bender—they drive on a different side of the road in England....

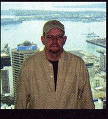


JOE RYBICKI has an office that overlooks San Francisco's Mission Street, which allows him a bird's-eye view of all sorts of great *Burnout*-style crashes. At this point, he arbitrarily assigns points, but he's working on an elaborate rating system based on the amount of destruction.



THIERRY NGUYEN now sails the world, going to quaint little communities untouched by the harshness of modern technology and infecting them with the PSP. It's fodder for his upcoming not-even-close-to-literary work, *How the World Learned to Stop Worrying And Love the PSP.*

GIANCARLO VARANINI wants to know why there isn't a game in which Voltron has to fight Walker, Texas Ranger in a ring of fire with a crowd of onlookers comprised mostly of the zombies from *Thriller* and that creepy king from the Burger King commercials. Wait, what?



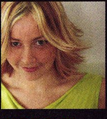
LOGAN PARR just got back from his trip to New Zealand. Recently he was caught doing a Maori dance called the haka. He immediately tasked the rest of the staff with learning it as well, courtesy of the website www.newzealand.com/travel/about-nz/culture/haka-feature/haka.cfm.

RYAN VULK wishes to make an epic trilogy about the dark side of corn-dog eating. His plan for the trilogy? "The first film will be about the forging of the corn dogs, the second about the eating of the corn dogs, and the third will be about the consequences of eating the corn dogs."

ALEJANDRO CHAVETTA has began negotiations to achieve "living-for-free" status. This will enable him to eat as many hot dogs as he wants without ever having to pay for them. Then he will have snacks to munch while playing his brand-new PSP, which he will also obtain for free.

V DOWN. PLEASU

TODD ZUNIGA has his hands in many fires—relaunching his literary humor site, Opium-Magazine.com; playing *Winning Eleven 8*; and prepping for his first E3 as a freelancer. His current "Fired Up" rating re: PSP: 8/10. He avoids NYC nightlife by playing *Lego Star Wars* into the wee hours.



ZOE FLOWER is caught on the horns of a very sticky dilemma. Will she accessorize her PSP with one of Marc Jacobs' oh-so-stylish new carrying cases, or will she instead opt to do a hip-hop vibe by sampling from the Baby Phat line? Too many accessories and not enough money....

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine (ISSN #1094-6683) is published monthly by Ziff Davis Media Inc., 28 East 28th Street, New York, NY 10016. Periodicals Postage Paid at New York, NY 10016 and additional mailing offices. Single-issue rate: $8.99. Subscription Rates: One Year (12 issues and 12 demo discs) $49.97 U.S., $65.97 all other countries. Ride along enclosed. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine, P.O. Box 55362, Boulder, CO 80322-5362. For Subscription Service Inquiries call us at 800-627-6458 U.S. and Canada, or 303-604-7445 all other countries. Fax us at 850-683-4094 U.S. and Canada, or 303-604-0518 all other countries, or visit our subscription website at service.playstationmagazine.com. Back Issues: Back issues are $8 each in the US, $10 each elsewhere (subject to availability). Prepayment is required. Make checks payable to Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine. Mail your requests to: Back Issues, Ziff Davis Media Inc., P.O. Box 53131, Boulder, CO 80322-3131. Mailing lists: We sometimes make lists of our customers available to mailers of goods and services that may interest you. If you do not wish to receive their mailings, please write to us at: Official U.S. Playstation Magazine, P.O. Box 55362, Boulder, CO 80322-5362. Copyright © 2004 Ziff Davis Media Inc. All Rights Reserved. Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine is a registered trademark of Ziff Davis Publishing Holdings Inc. Without limiting the rights under copyrights reserved herein, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without the prior written notice of Ziff Davis Media Inc. The editors and publishers are not responsible for unsolicited materials. For permission to reuse material from our publications or websites, or to use our logo, contact Ziff Davis Media's Rights and Permissions Manager, Olga Gonopolsky, at permissions@ziffdavis.com. For article reprints and e-prints, contact FosteReprints, 866-879-9144. TM & © for all other products and the characters contained therein are owned by the respective trademark and copyright holders. All materials in this magazine are subject to change and the publisher assumes no responsibility for such changes. The Canadian GST registration number is 140496720 RT. Publications Mail Agreement No. 40009221. Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to PO Box 503, RPO West Beaver Creek, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 4R6. Printed in the USA.

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Stephen Veith (Enterprise Group Publishing Director)
Monica Vila (Event Marketing Group)
Senior Director, Manufacturing Carlos Lugo
Director of Corporate Communications Randy Zane
Contact anyone on this masthead using firstname_lastname@ziffdavis.com

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MIDNIGHT

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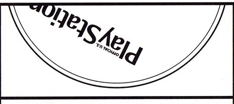
ON THE DVD

TRY BEFORE YOU BUY

This disc was on some sort of crazy diet that limited it to just two playable demos. Bad disc! We're putting it on the Fatkins diet so it can balloon into an ultrademo disc that can eat other demo discs for further nourishment.



WATCH AND PLAY

ALSO CHECK OUT
An important lesson on why sound matters. Then track down all the appearances of the Wilhelm scream.

PlayStation.2
DARKWATCH

DARKWATCH

Necromania abounds in this demonstration of Old West justice. We hope this will herald the showing of John Wayne's unreleased film *Rio Zombie*.

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

If you wish you could lead a crack team of soldiers but have either too much gut or not enough charisma, you can order these polygons around instead.

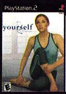
Sound Pursuit
Loading

SOUND PURSUIT

Hey, you can pretend to be a sound effects engineer! Try it! We dare you to make a sound of a monkey eating a giraffe. You'll only win pride, though.

PSYCHONAUTS

Tim Schafer is some sort of crazed genius who comes up with meat circuses and black velvet paintings of Mexican wrestlers. Watch and love!



YOURSELF!FITNESS

Those of you with huge pythons for arms can ignore this video. But if you have a hard time crushing a paper cup, you might want to watch.

PlayStation.2
devil may cry 3
CAPCOM

DEVIL MAY CRY 3

Can someone please tell us what the lyrics are? We keep thinking the game is telling us to "taste your face." Oh yeah, and Dante is still cool beans.

STAR WARS EPISODE III

Some crude dudes might drool at the chance to ogle a digital Natalie Portman. But we know the real draw: DIGITAL CHRISTOPHER LEE. Word.

DESTROY ALL HUMANS

Uh-oh! Aliens are coming! This video will tell you much about the imminent threat. You better check your stomach to make sure no aliens pop out!

YAY! KEYS!
You get all sorts of stuff unlocked for both *Gungrave: OD* and *Psi-Ops*!

METAL GEAR ACID PSP

Check it out! Someone other than Hideo Kojima is telling you about how to play the new *Metal Gear* game! Weird! Where's Hideo hiding?

UNTOLD LEGENDS PSP

Go read the review on page 111. Or perhaps read it while this video is playing in the background. Then you can see if the legend is still untold or not.

PLAYSTATION UNDERGROUND TEAM

Demo Disc Producers
Gary Barth, Manuel Sousa, Jerome Strach, Chris Tan
Marketing Team
Steve Williams, Jesse Caid, Eric Lempel
Executive Producer
Andrew House
Format Q&A
Sam Bradley, Edward Toomy
Q&A Account Coordinator
Eric Ippolito

Programming and interface artwork by Lifelike Productions, Inc.
Lead Programmers
William Bohan, Ron Midthun, Avery Lodato
3D Artists Jason Robinson, Philip Williamson, David Hayes
Producer Jessi Harrison
President Katherine Williams
Technical Director Tim Edwards

SPECIAL THANKS
Maimoona Block, Kirsten Costello, Christine DeNezza, Tom Gillan, Cori Lucas, Gerald Martin, Sean Thomas, Jim Williams

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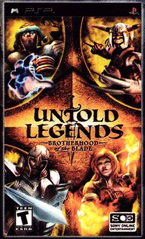

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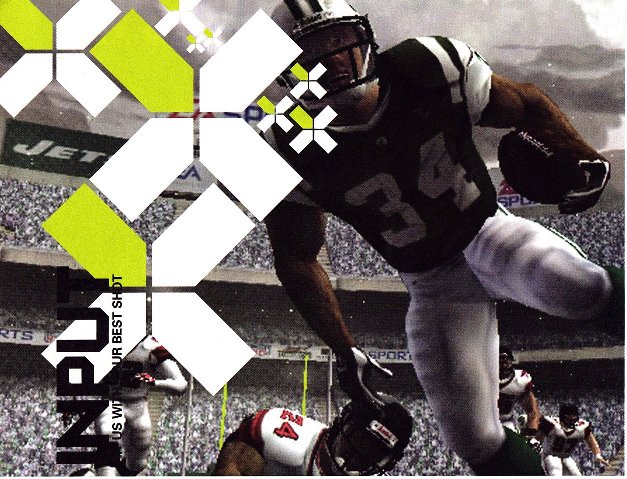

PlayStation
PSP
03.24.05

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Political science and economics have answered the question of the EA *Madden* series' takeover of football. In the real world, companies need to control the means of production when they can, and EA has done specifically what nature told it to do. It has become the bourgeois of sorts by taking over the modes of production in the football realm, while Sega or ESPN Videogames or Take-Two can either become the proletariat by working for the *Madden* series if it wants to continue creating football games, or it can leave, which it has done, and then become a bourgeois of the baseball industry. However, the main thing people are complaining about with the EA *Madden* series is the lack of innovation or creativity due to competition. WOW! These people have not studied economics. The matter of fact in this situation is that if the *Madden* series does deteriorate due to lack of competition or creativity, the consumers will either exit or voice their opinions about the matter. The choice between exit or voice is due to loyalty, but EA and everyone in general will know if the stranglehold on the football industry has gone awry when, as an extreme example, consumers start buying AFL games or somesuch! [Actually, EA nabbed the AFL license too, but we see your point. *—Ed.*] Thus, the takeover by EA really should not anger or frustrate anyone because economics has provided the solution.

Tiger Cai
via e-mail

CONTACT OPM

Snail Mail
OPM
101 Second Street
8th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105

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ACTIVATE TURBO SPEED!

I read the PSPredecessors section of your latest issue. It's very good; however, you made me angry. You forgot to mention the Turbo Express! How could you do such a thing? Not only did it allow you to play your TurboGrafx-16 games on the road, you could also watch TV with the add-on adapter! No love for NEC? I'd love to hear your excuse.

Jim Reilly
via e-mail

Jeremy Parish made a very significant omission in the article on portable gaming...not only did the venerable Turbo Express not get mentioned, but he lists the Sega Game Gear as the first to offer a TV tuner accessory. The Turbo Express offered very advanced features, like the active matrix display. Even better, it didn't need special, cut-down versions for portable play, but could take the exact same games as the TurboGrafx-16. And, yes, it had the TurboVision TV tuner. Both are still quite rare and expensive on eBay.

jpollack
via e-mail

I just wanted to let you know that in your recent article PSPredecessors, you failed to mention a revolutionary machine called the Turbo Express. This $300 handheld version of NEC's TurboGrafx-16 came out in 1991, the same year as the SNES. It played TurboGrafx-16 titles that were the size of a credit card and had, in my opinion, graphics on par with SNES and Genesis (no bias here, I owned all of them). This is a feat Sega fell short of in 1991 with the Game Gear, and that Nintendo finally accomplished in 2001 with the GBA. Games like *Valis, Splatter House*, and *Keith Courage* are still close to my heart. I'm getting so nostalgic that I think a trip to eBay is in my future.

Joshua Malec
via e-mail

GAMERS ARE TALKING ABOUT

STRAIGHT FROM THE OPM MESSAGE BOARDS

SONIC WITH A DESERT EAGLE!

Sega's biggest challenge is overcoming negative assumptions with its newest game, *Shadow the Hedgehog* (see page 52). Right when Sega announced the game and premiered the trailer, the Internet was aflutter with text-based chatter.

yakityyakblah set the general tone by saying, "Dude, he's like totally black and has a gun. Plus he's got an in-your-face attitude to the max! Oh, and apparently you can be good or evil, so like, you can totally jump on bunnies or, uhhh, not help old ladies across the street!"

Slightly later on, **c_strife97** quips, "While playing through all the *Sonic* games, one thing I kept thinking to myself was, 'Sonic needs guns.'"

Squealpiggy maintains the Sega pile-on with, "Wow, *Sonic the Hedgehog* goes dark and edgy and there's open-ended gameplay in a virtual sandbox. It's about time the powers that be made a more mature game about a blue cartoon hedgehog. I especially like the way that you can choose between evil and good."

Springing to Shadow's defense, **JustinCredible1** cautions against hasty assumptions: "NOTE TO EVERYONE: Shadow is a bad guy; bad guys carry guns. Man, **bleep** Sega for taking a risk, eh? B*stards, clearly they're ruining the videogame industry! So far it sounds like it could be cool, like a *Jak* game; plus open-ended gameplay isn't anything to turn up your nose at, either. I'll wait until I play it before I say it sucks, thanks."

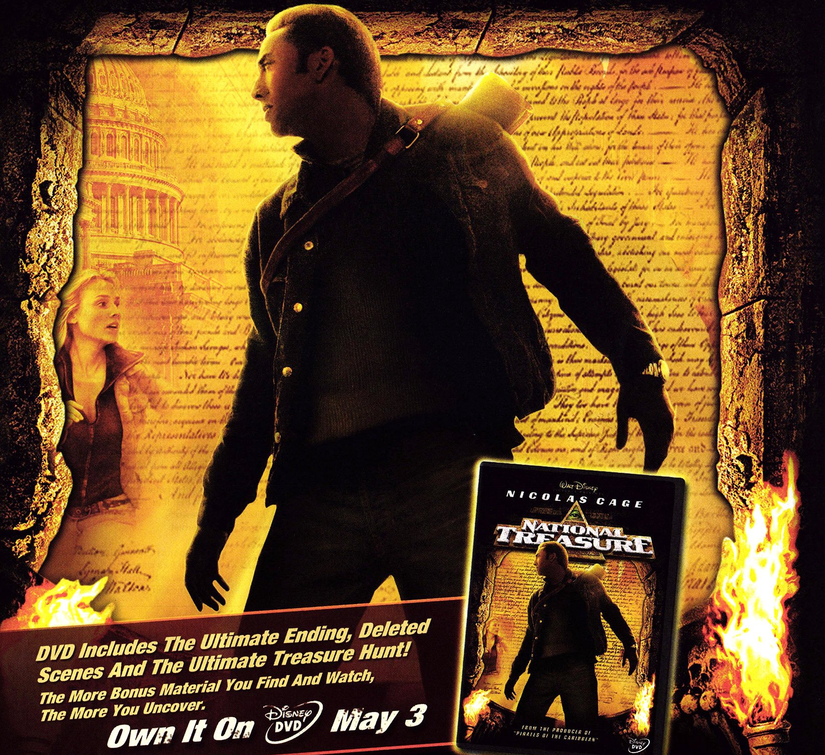
PS BACKWARDS

The wise **edgerunner** decided to bring up an oft-discussed topic: backward compatibility. He straight-up says: "I applauded the fact that the PS2 was able to play PS1 discs, especially during the early days of the console when great games were a tad scarce. But I think over the life of my console I've rarely popped in a PS1 game (*Intelligent Qube, Deception*, and *FFVII* when I'm feeling nostalgic). That said, I'm wondering if I'm the exception to the rule."

"I'm a 'live in the now' kinda guy. Right there with you on how many PS1 games I put into my PS2. I think it was probably during the 3-6 month 'transition period' between the two, when I already purchased a PS2 but still had unfinished PS1 games. My habits will probably be the same on PS3," mused **68angst**.

luccia thus pronounced, "Yes, they [need backward compatibility]. All the way. I'm sick of collecting consoles."

FROM THE PRODUCER OF "PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN"



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About your article PSPredecessors. It didn't even give a mention of the revolutionary NEC powerhouse Turbo Express. It blew away many, but seeing it was a portable that played TurboGrafx-16 games, I understand the exclusion.

Mike
via e-mail

Writer Jeremy Parish responds thusly: "The Turbo Express was outside the scope of the article since it was designed to play your TurboGrafx-16 games on the go, as opposed to the purely portable systems included. Also, it was a very good system that did well, which is why it wasn't in the PSPrevention section either."

BETTER THAN A POUND OF FLESH

Well, I did it. I really needed the money. All these new games coming out, how was I supposed to pay for them? Sure, I could just get a job, but this was so much easier. My parents are pretty upset. They just don't understand. Maybe they will when I show them all the money I have. I sold my body...kinda. I sold a foot. I wish I had two feet, but because I have cut it before, I only had one. One foot of my hair, sold to the highest bidder. Ah, the things we do for videogames!

Jenna Villegas
via e-mail

This foot-long segment of hair sold for $60 on eBay. Really. Yep.

SOMEBODY HAS DISPOSABLE CASH!

Damn, am I ready for *GT4*. I've already bought the awesome Driving Force Pro wheel, and I've got the game preordered, too. What more, you ask? Well, take a look at these pics of my setup, and you'll probably notice how excited I am about the game. Me and my dad built the thing sometime around November (back when *GT4* was going to be released in December). Like?

Daniel Panimondo
via e-mail

We approve of your heady excitement. Drive free, young sir, drive free.

CORRECTION

Blarg gnomes struck again! They whisked away a half-blarg from *ESPN MLB 2K5*, making it a 3.5 instead of a 4. Curse them! We'll get around to catching one someday, really.

MADDEN'S LINING OF SILVER, YES

WAKE UP, PEOPLE!!!! The NFL license was on the table for anyone to pick up. The NFL chose to sell the license to someone, and EA had the funds needed to buy it, period. Yes, I am a fan of *Madden*, but the *2K* series was good as well. If Take-Two had the opportunity to buy the license, it would have done so in a second to eliminate the 500-pound gridiron gorilla once and for all, and everyone knows it! That's just business. The best way to beat the competition is to eliminate the competition, and that's what EA did. It was a brilliant move on EA's part, and all I have to say is kudos!

Dajuan Donald
via e-mail

People need to understand, though, just because EA has no competition for a NFL game does not mean it is going to let its "money maker" game go down the toilet. John Madden himself has a huge devotion to his game franchise, and I strongly believe he will continue to oversee it and make sure EA does not let his franchise drop in its standards of new excellence every season.

Another positive aspect of the buyout is that we may see ESPN produce new football games, meaning Arena Football League.

David Daniels
via e-mail

Actually, in January EA secured an exclusive four-year deal with the AFL, so that's out. But that still leaves limitless opportunities for unlicensed games.

PSP-TO-FEMALE EXCHANGE RATE?

Giancarlo likes to put potato chips in his sandwiches?! My girlfriend likes to do the same thing! He better not steal my girlfriend away from me! If he does, I'll just steal his PSP!

~lonewolf~
via e-mail

GC responds: "F*** YEAH!" We're not sure whether he's cheering on your girlfriend's amusing habit, or the idea of trading her for a PSP like some sort of Stone Age chattel. «

ASK US ANYTHING
AND WE'LL ANSWER

PUT THIS IN YOUR PIPE!

Q What is your favorite videogame for Sony PSP?

Brian Dunlop
vie e-mail

A *Top Gun.*

INTERCONSOLE LOVE

Q Can I play *Splinter Cell* online on my PS2 with someone on Xbox Live?

Ryan Maggs
Grand Junction, CO

A Much as you love for your PS2 to make some sort of Interweb love connection to the Xbox via *Splinter Cell*, that is not possible. The Xbox and PS2 are barely on speaking terms, with the only concession being that they can see other people (sometimes the same people), but have no actual contact with each other. Alas. Such is the harsh nature of relationships. You're a young lad, and you'll learn more firsthand someday. We think.

WE HATE MATHS

Q OK, me and my friend came up with a good one. Let's see if you can answer this one. OK, if it is 0 degrees Fahrenheit today, and it is supposed to be twice as cold tomorrow. What exact temperature will it be?

Jakob W. and Ryan F.
via e-mail

A Geez, what's with the crazy science questions lately? Is this a homework assignment? Because whatever answer we'll give you is going to come a month or two later. Anyways, "twice as cold" is a really imprecise term. For now, we'll assume you mean "half the temperature," (since you're already dealing with negative degrees). With that assumption, then the answer (after converting Fahrenheit to Celsius and then to Kelvin, dividing Kelvin by 2 and converting that back to Celsius and again to Fahrenheit) might be -229.7 degrees, which is obscenely cold. There's not enough space to get into other possible answers here. Just stop with the trick science questions, please! We're liberal arts majors! Ask us about Emily Dickinson or Billy Shakes or something.

BLOG OF THE MONTH

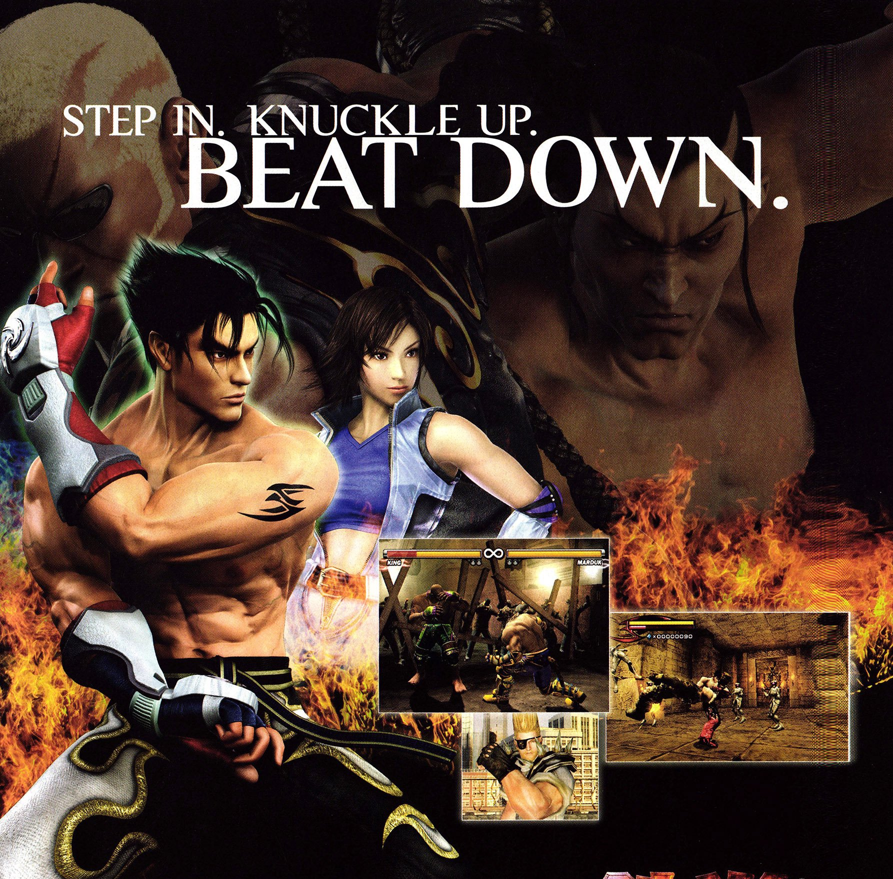
"Honestly, as a girl gamer, I found it hard to be appreciated. I wasn't the Stereotypical Girl Gamer, but it didn't matter. And because I've established who I am before I joined 1UP, I came here knowing that who I was wasn't fake, that I was myself and no one could change that. Don't be the kid in the back row who doesn't answer questions because you think you'll be laughed at. Don't be the blogger on 1UP.com who won't write because you think there's nothing important to blog about. Don't be the person who manages the store your parents own when you really want to study quantum physics. It took me a good four years of high school to establish the mere grounds on who I was. Writing on 1UP.com has only sped the process up for me."

Erin Ali
misato_anami.1UP.com

CLUB OF THE MONTH

"The ladies from Female Eye are on duty to answer your questions about life, love, and gaming! We know that being a hardcore gamer can sometimes be rough. But with a little work and a lot of heart...we can see you through!"

Female Eye for the Gamer Guy
Femaleeye-club.1UP.com



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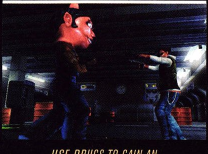
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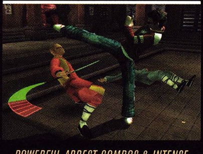
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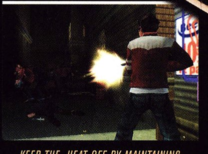
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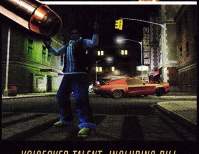
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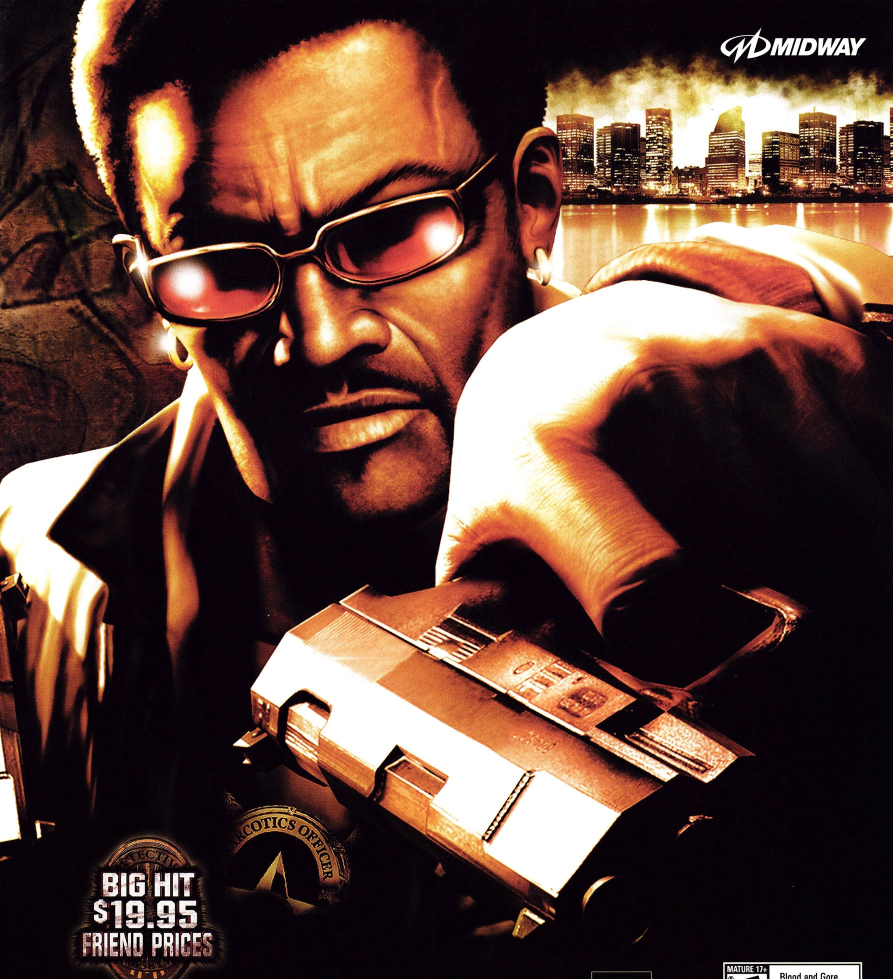
BELLAMY & MICHAEL MADSEN



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XBOX

PlayStation 2

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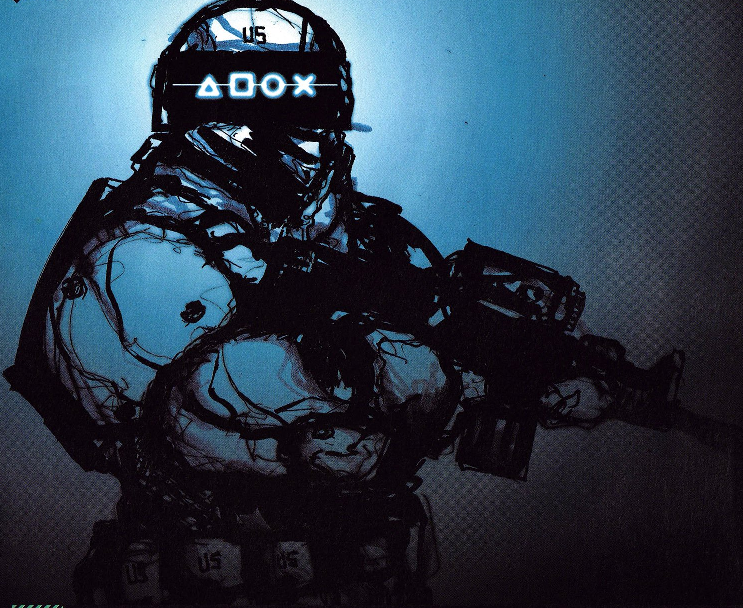


HYPE

032>

REEL-TIME PS2

THE BIG SCREEN COMES TO THE SMALL

INSIDE

26 **SOUL CALIBUR III**
Start practicing your combos.

31 **ZOE FLOWER**
The PSP in fashion crisis.

41 **THE GODFATHER**
Your dreams of a polygonal Robert Duvall are realized.

46 **JAWS**
Alas, no lasers here...

55 **SOUND VISION**
Lumines creator Mizuguchi on how big developers can't compete with smaller ones.

56 **SOCOM 3**
What can we say—we love a man in uniform.

66 **NUMBERS**
The page that counts.

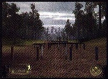
IN THE ARMY NOW

AMERICA'S ARMY HITS THE PS2 IN JULY, BUT WHAT EXACTLY DOES THE ARMY GET OUT OF IT?

The United States Army has been the subject of a heated debate over the past few years. The combination of the need to increase its numbers and speculation over the possibility of the government reinstating the draft has turned attention toward the Army's recruiting practices. While the Army doesn't actively promote *America's Army* specifically as a recruiting tool, there's no question that it, and other military games, have been successful at garnering the attention of gamers and raising interest in the possibility of joining the Army. We spoke with Maj. Chris Chambers, the head of the *America's Army* project, to get the Army's view on what *America's Army* actually is and what they hope to accomplish with it.

OPM What is the Army's involvement in the *America's Army* project?
MAJ. CHRIS CHAMBERS We originated and developed the project. It's an Army project that came from within the Army. My office, which is a Pentagon agency, came up with the concept and created it as a strategic communication tool.

OPM How would you compare *America's Army* as a recruitment campaign against the Army's other recruitment campaigns?
MCC Well, there are a lot of different ways to reach people. And this is one more way. We've done a lot of outreach through a variety of mediums, everything from TV to print ads, events, and calling folks. All of those ways of reaching young people have been tried and continue to be tried. The videogame medium is something new. The popularity of games has risen dramatically in the last 10 years, and young people are spending a very large amount of their time playing these games. We recognized that the Army's core content and what we do could be displayed pretty well in a videogame format. So we looked at the videogame as an information tool, and it's nonthreatening because the young person voluntarily seeks it out, and in the case of the PC version, downloads it for free. They play it on their own. There's no push at all. It's totally private, so we never know who is playing the game. So it's a great way to get our message out.



OPM A study was recently released saying that parents are the biggest hurdle in the recruitment process. Do you think *America's Army* does a better job of informing parents as well as gamers?
MCC The videogame demographic in the United States, specifically for PC games, skews toward an older audience. Not only are there large numbers of teens and young people playing the game, but there is a generation of parents as well as aunts and uncles that are also playing this game. We think that our message, which is accurate and truthful, is reaching the parental generation as well, to a degree. The other piece is that we're very cognitive of the fact that parents are concerned about what their children are consuming in terms of entertainment, so we've been very adamant about maintaining a T rating. We've also developed tools where parents can further control what their kids are consuming. They can put restrictions on what they get out of their game.

OPM There's been a lot of controversy about games and their depiction of violence. Attorney Jack Thompson even said that *America's Army* is a "murder simulator."
MCC We don't teach any skills in the game. What we do is allow young people to explore an Army experience, and the experience has a lot of very social positives. It's about working in a value-laden organization. It's about teamwork. It's about mission accomplishment, and it's about discovering these things in a virtual sandbox where the people come together and play with each other. There is absolutely no skill training or anything like that being communicated here. It's about the core ethos of our organization.

OPM Other military games have proven to be effective in getting people interested in the military. What do you think is responsible for this?
MCC It's somewhat of a natural connection. This is a format that has always interested young people. Movies have been a traditional source of entertainment and information to a degree for things military and historical actions. That's been true ever since the movie industry started, and before that it was popular periodicals like *Harper's Magazine*. So this isn't a new phenomenon. The tool is new and that's what really led us to believe that we had to produce this game ourselves, because the Army approach to this—in terms of movies—was that we sometimes will support productions. We don't really produce movies on our own or do any sort of messaging in them, but we thought that the game industry provided us a way to cost-effectively create a very solid message and deploy it out to a huge number of people.

OPM Has the Army received any flak for using tax dollars to develop a videogame?
MCC When you look at the size of the Army and the recruiting goals that are required of it, we have to recruit or contract with about 80,000 people just for the active component each year. This is a very cost-effective way of reaching out to a potential pool of candidates that may not have had any other direct contact with the Army. If you look at cost per person for each hour of messaging, the cost of our game reaches about 25 to 30 cents per person per hour of delivered message, whereas typical TV advertising in prime time runs $5 to $7 more per hour. Also, if you look at the quality of the message, the message is hand-tailored by us and we know that it's being delivered effectively, because in order to play the game, you have to be absorbed. With TV advertising, you don't really have to pay attention to it because it's more of a push style. If you add up all the dollars for a game production over several years, it's a large number, but we think it's taxpayer money well spent.

"WE HAVE TO RECRUIT ABOUT 80,000 PEOPLE EACH YEAR."

OPM How effective has *America's Army* been in the recruitment process?
MCC We look at effectiveness as the communication process and not as recruitment. Not really splitting hairs here, but we don't intend to have young people play our game and immediately go out and join the Army. It's not about that. This is a way to deliver a message to a large segment of the population, some young and some older, with a tailored message. Though the Army is large, it's still at its lowest level since the end of World War II on a per capita basis. The information has got to come [from] somewhere for these people, and more and more, the younger generations are getting information from pop culture, and videogames are a part of the pop culture.

OPM Will the Army receive any money from the sales of the PS2 version?
MCC We have an agreement with Ubisoft that does include a trademark royalty payment. That trademark is *America's Army*—the name and the brand are very popular and well known. That allowed us to create this partnership with Ubisoft, such that we would get this console game produced and offset some of the taxpayer investment by taking a return investment on the brand. The royalty money goes into the general treasury of the United States. There's a proposal to modify that and make it offset the cost of the program that was created for the project. If that gets approved, it will allow us to offset some of our costs, but right now, we don't have the authority. «

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED?

The PC version of *America's Army* currently has 4.7 million registered users. That's quite a large number of people, but the Army hopes to reach even more with the PlayStation 2 version.

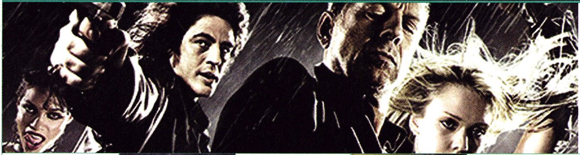
FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR'S ROLE

While it wasn't developed by the military, THQ's *Full Spectrum Warrior* is another interesting military game in that it was originally commissioned by the Army to help train troops in certain combat situations. The game presents combat in a different perspective. You issue commands to individual troops in your squad instead of taking direct control of them like you would in a typical third-person shooter. The end result is an almost real-time-strategy-game feel that puts you in the heat of the action. Interestingly, many complained that the commercially released Xbox version of the game was too easy, but in fact, the game has a mode that allows you to play on the difficulty setting that is specifically used for the military, so it's actually much harder.

APRIL 2K5

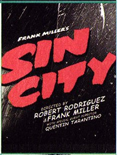
THE MONTH AHEAD FOR YOU AND YOUR PLAYSTATION 2

SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THUR | FRI | SAT



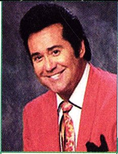
01

Save the "You're adopted!" jokes for next year, and instead check out the best comic book adaptation to hit theaters: ***Sin City***. OK, ***Batman Begins*** also rocks, but it's a superhero flick.


FRANK MILLER'S
SIN CITY
DIRECTED BY ROBERT RODRIGUEZ & FRANK MILLER
WITH SPECIAL GUEST DIRECTOR QUENTIN TARANTINO

03

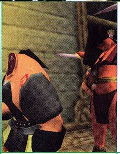
Somewhere in the distant past, several women managed to birth such luminaries as Eddie Murphy, Alec Baldwin, Wayne Newton, and Marlon Brando. Huzzah for ovaries, huzzah!



05

Do you have a Ulysses Grant in your pocket, or four? ***Rise of the Kasai***, ***Atelier Iris***, ***Virtual Pool Tournament Edition***, and ***Classified: The Sentinel Crisis*** would love to chat.

[NEW GAMES]



07

08

Kung Fu Hustle: From the duder who brought you *Shaolin Soccer*, comes this tale of another duder who is fighting legions of duders in order to join the infamous Axe Gang. This movie rocks.

10

11

12

Resident Evil Outbreak: File #2, ***Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition***, ***Predator: Concrete Jungle***, and ***Dead to Rights II*** are all screaming for greenbacks. Give or deny!

[NEW GAMES]

14

Did you send a birthday card to Thomas Jefferson yesterday? You cad! Now you have to send a "belated birthday" card that has a picture of a really sad and apologetic beagle on it.

15

Oh no! Uncle Sam is calling for his money back. You better pay up, otherwise the IRS is going to knock down your door and repossess your PS2 and give it to that smelly kid next door.

16

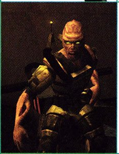
17

Whoa, time to scarf down some balls of cheese for National Cheeseball Day! Who could have imagined taking curdled milk and doing weird things to it and then sculpting it into a ball? Not us!

19

It's a lean day for game releases, as the only ones on the menu are ***Ford Mustang Racing***, ***Area 51***, and ***Stolen***. These games are lonely; please, give them a home.

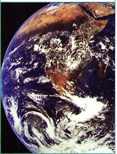
[NEW GAMES]



21

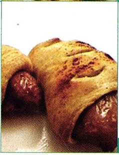
22

Celebrate and respect Earth Day. Because if you don't, Mother Nature is going to explode in your face and force you to fly around the stars, looking for a new electrical outlet for your PS2.



24

More food fun for a Sunday! It's National Pigs in a Blanket Day, so that means it's time to stuff those wieners between lovely and warm pockets of bread. Man alive, we love life right now.



26

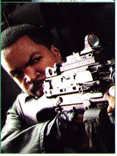
At press time, you'd need 1,560 yen (plus applicable taxes) to purchase a shiny new copy of ***Motocross Mania 3***. Our favorite coin is the 50-yen one, because it's got a hole!

[NEW GAMES]

28

29

Tough choices today! Dare you watch Ice Cube shoot it up in ***XXX: State of the Nation***, or watch Tim from ***The Office*** figure out the secrets of ***The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy***? Hmmm!



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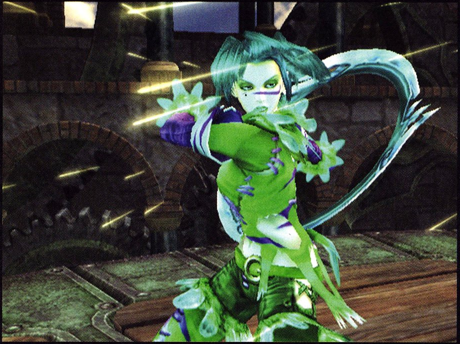
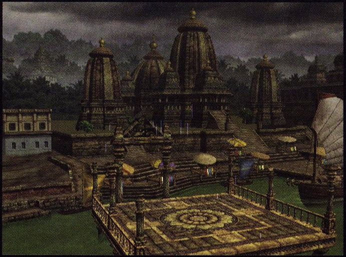
TIRA



ZAS

SETSUKA



ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

There will be a whole bunch of new stages, such as Greek shrines, German castles, and random clock towers. They will still maintain the lack of a border (for you cheap ring-out fans). And we haven't been told much about Zasalamel, Tira, and Setsuka, but then again, all you really need to know about a character is what weapon he or she uses, which is evident here.

SOUL CALIBUR III

YEP, SOUL IS STILL BURNING

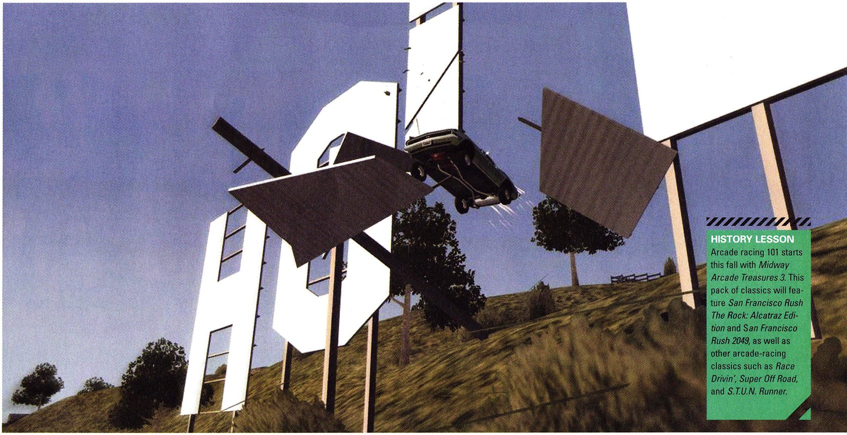
It can be legitimately argued that *Soul Calibur II* is the best 3D fighting game in existence. Before all of you *Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution* fans go yakitori on us and write angry screeds about what we just said, we fully acknowledge *VF4*'s brilliance, but you have to admit it's hard to argue with a game that anyone, button-mashing newbie or combo-creating master, can play. And as cool as *Tekken 5* is (see the review on page 88), it doesn't quite have the sway of *Soul Calibur*—which makes the announcement that *Soul Calibur III* (creating a Namco fighter double-whammy) will come out this year an extra piece of awesome.

Much of *Soul Calibur III* is safely tucked away at Namco, and few details have been released. We do know, however, that there will be a traditional story mode called "tales of souls mode" and a typical versus mode for fighting your buddies. As expected, the game will have a few new stages and characters (three are pictured here, and the total character count is at least 25). There's no confirmation of a follow-up to *Soul Calibur II*'s weapon master mode (the closest is some unexplained feature called soul arena mode), but considering how spectacularly awesome that mode was, we'd be surprised if it's absent in *Soul Calibur III*.

Taking a lesson from *Tekken 5*'s character customization (which itself seemed influenced by *VF4: Evo*), *Soul Calibur III* will let you create a whole new character. At the moment, you can choose a character's sex, occupation, and weapon. We haven't seen how detailed this can be, but considering some of the game's past characters, it's conceivable you could create a totally hot ninja pirate girl and then take your new creation over to the chronicles of the sword mode and start punching and slashing away.

Finally, no mention has been made of other platforms or exclusive characters, but there have been some hush-hush rumors about a certain ultracool dude from a recent sequel making an appearance.... «

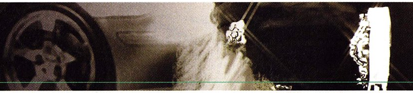
Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco **Release** August



HISTORY LESSON

Arcade racing 101 starts this fall with *Midway Arcade Treasures 3*. This pack of classics will feature *San Francisco Rush The Rock: Alcatraz Edition* and *San Francisco Rush 2049*, as well as other arcade-racing classics such as *Race Drivin', Super Off Road*, and *S.T.U.N. Runner*.

L.A. RUSH



MIDWAY RETOOLS A CLASSIC FRANCHISE? UNTHINKABLE!

If you spent any time in an arcade in the late '90s, chances are you sunk more than a few quarters into *San Francisco Rush*. A fast, challenging, completely insane arcade racer, the aptly named *Rush* offered ridiculous jumps, crazy stunts, and a moderately faithful rendition of the city of San Francisco. But with graphics requiring the most state-of-the-art arcade hardware of the time, the game never made a successful splash at home.

Now Midway is giving it another go—this time bringing that gleefully unrealistic racing to the streets of Los Angeles. But now (perhaps unsurprisingly) the game offers much more than straight-up arcade racing. Taking an admitted and obvious influence from games such as *Grand Theft Auto* and *True Crime, L.A. Rush* will mix straight-up racing with a variety of seedy missions. The idea is that your character had 30 cars stolen from him, and you need to race in order to learn clues as to their whereabouts, after which you must steal them back. You'll also need to steal and sell enemies' cars or even just destroy their property to teach them a lesson.

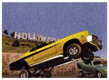
Right.

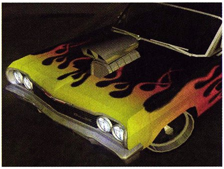
Look, we're just happy to be getting some more of that insane arcade action. Especially considering that much of the environment—including landmarks like the Hollywood sign and the Ferris wheel on the Santa Monica Pier—will be destructible. On top of that, each of the 36 licensed cars will be fully destructible. (Will someone please make sure *Gran Turismo*'s Kazunori Yamauchi learns of this?)

But the game won't be about just tearing things down; you'll also be able to build up your car with in-game renditions of real-life performance parts—sorry, "aftermarket enhancements"—from manufacturers such as Pirelli and House of Kolor.

So to recap: Steal a ride; pimp it out; use it to destroy Hollywood, Santa Monica, South Bay, South Central, or downtown L.A. Yeah, sounds like fun to us. «

Pub. Midway **Dev.** Midway San Diego **Release** Fall





WEST COAST ACTION: RUSH'S RIDES GET PIMPED

Some of the vehicles in *L.A. Rush* are being designed by West Coast Customs. Sound familiar? It's the home of *Pimp My Ride* and one of the most popular and most innovative custom shops around. Specializing in the outlandish, West Coast says, "If you're not sure anyone can do it, then chances are no one can except for us." Hit it up at www.westcoast-customs.com.

But WCC isn't the only big name lending street cred to *L.A. Rush*. Taking a cue from *Midnight Club 3*, *Rush* also features a magazine tie-in—this time with *Rides*. Like *DUB*, *Rides* is all about celebrities and their ridiculously (and expensively) customized cars. Check it out at www.rides-mag.com.

SONY
Lead
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Position
04/04
Stunt Score 5295
Lap
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Time
00:16.53
Best Lap --:--.--
Total 00:16:53
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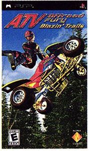

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WALK THE WALK

SAN FRANCISCO'S WALK OF GAME HONORS ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT'S BEST

The Walk of Fame is one of Hollywood's most popular and iconic landmarks. Begun in 1960 with more than 2,500 blank stars, the Walk of Fame starts at Grauman's Chinese Theatre and flows up and down Hollywood Boulevard. The stars display permanent honor to over 2,130 of Tinseltown's greatest actors, directors, singers, and other personalities, including animated characters and even a couple of dogs (Lassie and Rin Tin Tin).

Not to be outdone, or at least left out, the game industry is starting its own honorary "walk," ever so cleverly dubbed the Walk of Game. Inaugural ceremonies were held at the Sony Metreon in San Francisco on March 8, concurrent with the annual Game Developers Conference, which was taking place at the neighboring Moscone Center.

The Walk of Game's six initial honorees included the game *Halo*; the characters Mario, Link, and Sonic the Hedgehog; and two actual people, legendary Nintendo designer Shigeru Miyamoto and Atari founder and *Pong* inventor Nolan Bushnell.

Bushnell, the oft-noted father of videogaming (and Chuck E. Cheese Pizza Time Theaters), raised some eyebrows with his acceptance speech, when he opined that games have become much more exciting than school and admonished the education system for demonizing games rather than embracing them as learning tools.

The 24-by-24-inch stars that constitute the Walk of Game will be a permanent fixture on the second floor of the Metreon, with yearly ceremonies planned. For a virtual tour, go to www.walkofgame.com. «

Miyamoto
Game Inductees

ZOE FLOWER

PSP IS THE NEW BLACK

ZOE FLOWER, aka "Gamer Girl," is a fashion whore/wannabe designer and gaming virtuoso. Her first memories of designing include programming her Atari 800XL to create a flashing rainbow giraffe and stitching a pencil case created from her first acid-wash jean skirt—which she still has to this day. See the details at zoe-flower.1UP.com.

WILL THE PSP REJUVENATE THE '80S FANNY PACK TREND?

It's no secret that I'm a ridiculous fangirl of the brightly colored world of Japanese culture. From the country's intriguingly well-dressed game designers to the infinitely eye-catching aesthetic of its product packaging, I find myself overcome with visual joy.

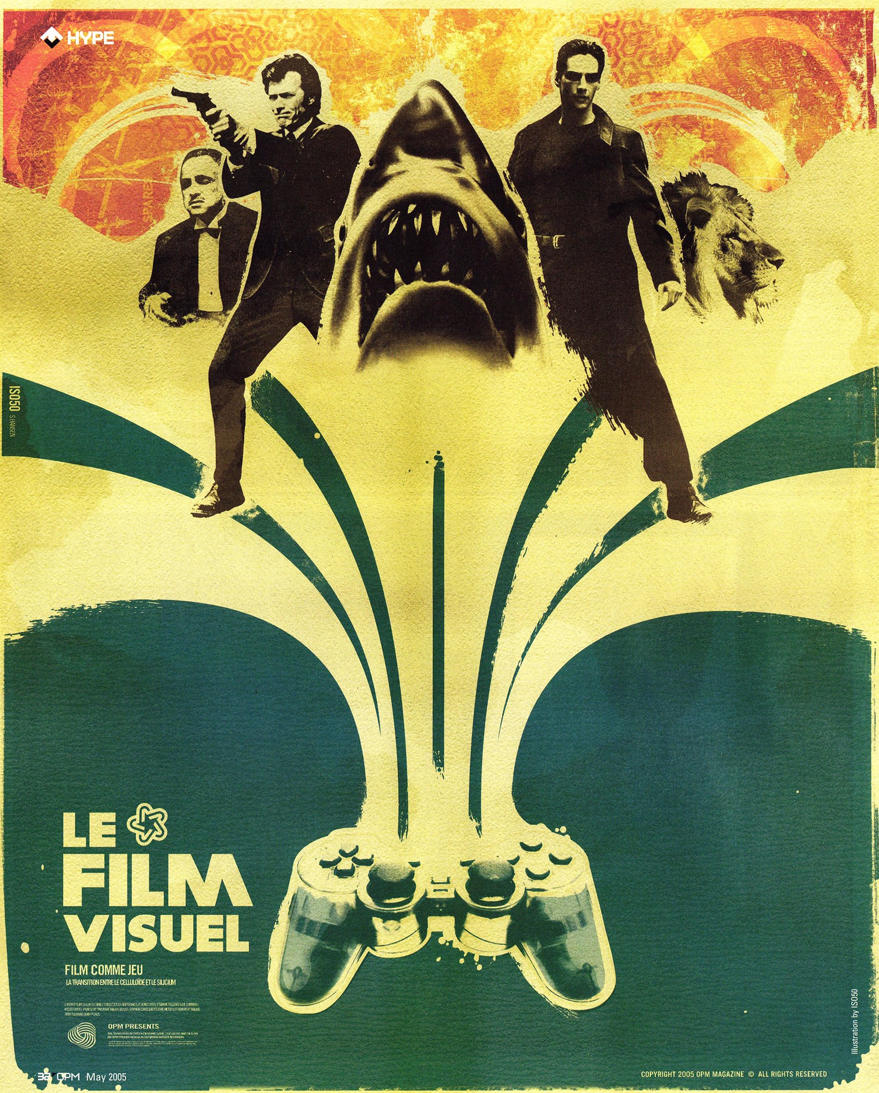
I've often wondered where my obsession with such a colorful culture came from—is it a programmed gender response to a world of bright pretty rainbow colors? More likely, it's the product of delightfully comforting childhood memories of digging through my mom's oil paints and eyeing/eating things called alizarin crimson and cerulean blue.

Well, my obsession with color came to the forefront at last fall's Tokyo Game Show, where I found myself compulsively excited about the PSP. It was not for the commonly noted features of incredible screen clarity and it's the sexualized analog nipple. Rather, I found myself gravitating to the handheld for the simple fact that it was shown in the perfect shade of buttercup yellow (with matching small Japanese girl in a pale yellow polo shirt). And now, as the fashion world rolls out a whole new palette for springtime and the PSP launches in North America, I have come to the realization that my color-coded decision-making process has Solid Snaked its way into my gaming existence.

Seriously, I can't be the only one who's noticed the sudden shift of handheld gaming from kiddie toy to hot fashion accessory. Now, as I'm busy planning the first shopping trip of the new season, I find myself utterly conflicted in my outfit planning. It's no longer the simple choice of complementary shoes, handbag, and eye shadow. Now I'm stressed that my standard accessories might end up conflicting with my shiny green MP3 player or my choice of handheld—both of which I will make visible to the public in an attempt to convey my geek-hipster vibe. (Contrary to popular belief, I find this insanely difficult to achieve!)

It may seem overtly girly or shallow or silly, but I'm rather serious about this. If I'm playing *Lumines* at the airport, I want it to be on a buttercup yellow PSP. I can't explain why, but this is extremely important to me! Just imagining it makes me giddy! I want it for the same reason I obsess over new Pumas and I am researching the carry case options I will have for my PSP. (How do guys deal with this situation, considering most don't even have a handbag to truck around today's technological necessities?) Will there be some funky shoulder strap or belt item for me to accessorize further? Or will the PSP rejuvenate the '80s fanny pack trend? And the most important question of all—will the PSP even come in another color other than standard Sony black? Because this might affect all footwear purchases for the year.

I suppose it's a sad day when modern fashion finally invades the last bastion we have of our preserved childhood pastimes. But leave it to Sony to figure out a way. This season, the PSP is the new black. «



LE FILM VISUEL

FILM COMME JEU

LA TRANSITION ENTRE LE CELLULOÏDE ET LE SILICIUM

LOREM IPSUM DOLOR SIT AMET CONSECTETUER ADIPISCING ELIT DONEC JUSTO ETIAM MI PELLENTESQUE COMMODO INTEGER JUSTO. PRAESENT TINCIDUNT MAURIS IACULIS, SEM NON CONSEQUAT FEUGIAT METUS ELIT HENDRERIT MAURIS NON PULVINAR DIAM PURUS

OPM PRESENTS

THE TRANSITION BETWEEN FILM AND GAME, CELLULOID AND SILICON
AN OPM PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH PLAYSTATION

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Illustration by ISO50

PLAYSTATION GOES REEL TIME

HOW THE BIG PICTURE GETS SMALL

Videogames are expensive to make: Development costs for a single game can run as much as $10 million. With that steep a price tag, it only makes sense that publishers try to minimize their risk. One way of doing this is by investing in known properties; movie licenses offer that familiarity, as well as the potential to appeal to people who might not traditionally be gamers.

So what compels a publisher to try to tackle a movie license? Will Kassoy, Activision's vice president of global brand management, explains, "The two primary questions that we ask when assessing a game license are 1) Is it a recognized brand/property with preawareness that fits the gaming demographic, and 2) Can the brand be built into a long-term gaming franchise?"

David DeMartini, the executive producer for EA's upcoming *Godfather* game, sees it as more of an organic approach. "I think the decision-making process is part instinctive," he says, "kind of looking at the potential of the movie game and then trying to make the call on how well it would translate into something that would move into the interactive space."

While games based on movie licenses have been with us since 1982's arcade classic *Tron* (which, incidentally, made more money than the Disney film did), publishers have recently begun expanding their reach. Instead of working only with current movie licenses, they've started mining video store shelves for older films that can be converted into videogames. Electronic Arts' *Godfather* game has one of the highest profiles of the new crop, but a slew of others is following in its wake.

Is a classic film franchise at a disadvantage when compared to a new movie property? Liz Buckley, a senior product manager for Vivendi Universal who is currently handling the upcoming *Jaws* game, says not necessarily: "I think any classic movie has a large, built-in fan base that makes it easier to market the title."

Lyle Hall, executive producer at Heavy Iron for games such as *The Incredibles* and *SpongeBob SquarePants: The Movie*, agrees. "The existing film will have already established an audience. Plus, you can constantly refer to the finished film as reference for the game."

It's not all easy sailing, though. Hall cautions, "The potential disadvantages are lack of freshness and immediacy in the audience's mind and expectations of what kind of game they anticipate should be made from the content."

DEVELOPMENT OF A GAME CAN COST AS MUCH AS $10 MILLION.

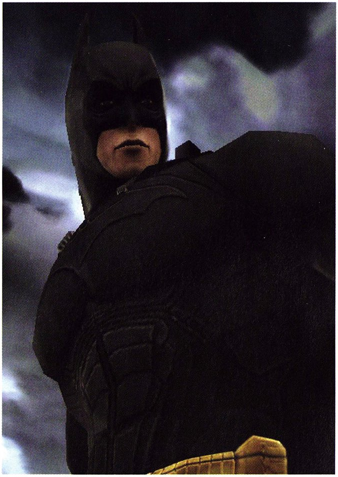
Dave Perry, president of Shiny Interactive, also believes that currency can be key. "Like your underpants, licenses get old pretty fast. If I got *Logan's Run*, many people would think, 'Huh? That's ancient!' Yet if there was a killer new *Logan's Run* movie released this year, then it could be very relevant."

Another potential pitfall to a classic license is that people's built-in expectations can be much higher. "When you're dealing with a movie that's never been released, you're going to stream off of all the buzz that's created by a new film release," says DeMartini. "When you deal with a classic like *The Godfather*, there's just a tremendous amount of responsi-

THE WARNER BROS. EFFECT

SHOULD DEVELOPERS PAY FOR BAD LICENSED GAMES?

Batman Begins isn't just a chance for EA to redeem itself for *Catwoman*: It's the first game to test Warner Bros.' new policy, which fines publishers whose games do not get high enough aggregate review scores.



So what do gamemakers think of the policy?

Liz Buckley can understand why Warner Bros. instituted it. "Any licensor wants their license translated into the best gameplay experience possible," she says. "You can't fault the fundamental reasoning behind the policy." But, she adds, "I think there have also been decent titles that sold well but for some reason were never well received in the press. It's important to remember that reviews are subjective, and because of that, it's hard to use them as a metric for measuring game success. Sell-through is the best metric."

Is it fair to punish a company for something beyond its control? Dan Mycka thinks not. He says, "It's up to the license holder to ensure they have chosen the most capable developer possible for a given project. A licensor's not choosing to work with the company again should be penalty enough."

A policy like Warner Bros.' can be reflective of a deeper problem, according to David DeMartini. "If a relationship is built on collaboration and trust, you don't need those provisions. You're both responsible to pull your position. Deliver a great movie, and deliver a great game."

"I have vocally disagreed with this Warner policy," adds Dave Perry. "I feel it's better to reward than to fine. Reward a team that excels. Motivate instead of threatening them. We have no control over a review—there are no reviewer qualifications or guidelines. So it's pretty insulting to a developer if they will be fined for something so beyond their control. All developers know that if their games suck, the market will quickly kill them off."

THE WINNER IS...

If they could make any movie into a game, these would be their picks.

Liz Buckley
"*Caddyshack* is one of my all-time favorite flicks. Maybe you could play [as] the gopher."

Lyle Hall
"*Raiders of the Lost Ark*! I want to update the 2600 version!"

Will Kassoy
"*Psycho*."

Dan Mycka
"The original *Alien*. I long for a true survival-horror title that pays homage to Ridley Scott's direction and Giger's designs."

Dave Perry
"My dream is to make two epic games, one with Peter Jackson and one with James Cameron. That would be more fun than doing any movie."

David DeMartini
"I'm already making it."

bility to get it right. People have an incredible amount of advance perception in regard to what the movie is about, and they have a lot of crystal-clear ideas as to what the game should be about."

Having the built-in recognition that comes with a license can be good, but some restrictions come as part of the package. Movie studios want the game to be representative of the franchise. In most cases, this means that executives from the studios keep close tabs on the game's development and must sign off at each step along the way.

So is all of this extra involvement a help or a hindrance? "Licenses tend to impose stringent rules," says Perry, "and game developers commonly seek complete creative freedom. That said, those rules can sometimes inspire you. Where licensing fails is when there is a level of licensing-approval management who don't play games, who don't care about games, and who think your game is as important as a coffee cup they will license next. They can uphold stupid rules that will ruin the experience. Many years ago I was told (for my *Terminator* game) that I couldn't kill the Terminator. Huh?"

Dan Mycka, lead artist for The Collective, welcomes the artistic guidelines. "Most modern games are getting so complex now that having the benefit of reference materials and finished preproduction art is most welcome," he says. "Sure, the opportunity for stretching your creative muscles is more limited, but it really allows the art team to focus on the quality of the art. You don't have to spend half of your time developing a visual direction. Once that demand is removed, you can spend more time faithfully re-creating the look and feel of the film or license."

Perry adds, "I think it's a cool challenge to try to match a movie's ambiance. The killer move is to find out who created the art concept work for the movie and get them on your team. That means that everything 'new' you create is also actually authentic. The fans will thank you for taking that step."

While it's nice to have the built-in marketing that's provided by a current film, what happens if the film ends up flopping? Can the game still succeed? Hall doesn't think so: "Rarely," he says. "In many ways, the game is counting on the film to deliver the initial excitement about the characters, world, story, surprises, and moments to the audience, and that will drive them to the game for more."

Activision's Kassoy is in agreement. "[The game] may get critical praise and some enthusiasts will buy the game, but if the film fails, more often than not, the game won't sell well, either."

Vivendi's Buckley disagrees, however. "I think [it can], yes. It always helps to have a successful movie, of course, because fans of the movie will be driven to check out the game. However, a well-designed game can certainly stand on its own and sell through, regardless of the association."

While licensed games have often been seen as a way to slap a brand on a mediocre-to-poor game and still make some money off it, the tide has started to shift. In fact, many movie games of late have been much more critically well received than their movie counterparts. Buckley says, "Unfortunately, a long history of subpar movie-to-game translations has created this preconception, but recently, the quality of these types of games has improved significantly. If the industry can continue to introduce great translations in this vein, we can shake the bad rap."

"It was only a matter of time before publishers and studios began to take movie videogames seriously," Mycka adds, "and I think we've reached the point that most of them are actually quite solid as a result."

> "IF THE FILM FAILS, MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, THE GAME WON'T SELL...."

Kassoy believes that part of the reason for this shift is that publishers have started to see the bigger picture. "I think publishers have realized that the right movie property done right can have huge success worldwide," he says. "As a result, publishers have taken more care with licensed intellectual property to place them with top development talent and time lines that allow for making a great game."

And Perry sees this as more than just a trend for the genre. "The quality levels of games overall are getting better. I really believe that. So I think that trickles down into the movie franchise world as well. It only follows that games based on movie properties will get better and better over the coming years." «

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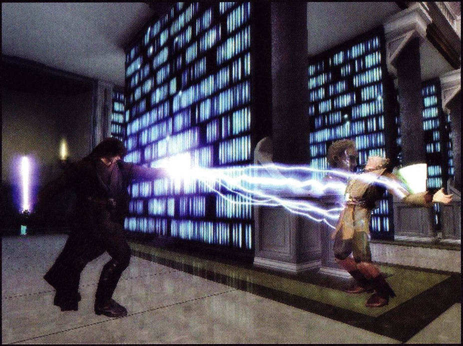
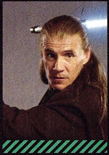
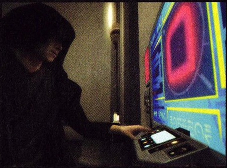




JEDI MASTER FOR REAL

Nick Gillard is a Jedi master. Don't laugh. He's not some delusional cosplayer—far from it. In fact, Gillard has worked on some 60 films as a stuntman and coordinator, including such biggies as *GoldenEye*, *Interview with the Vampire*, and *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

Gillard's prowess with the sword and his relationship with the *Star Wars* films—which goes all the way back to the original movie—have made him the world expert on lightsaber dueling. All the Jedi battles you see in *Episode III* were coordinated by Gillard, as is the Jedi lightsaber-play in the LucasArts game. Watch for Gillard to make an appearance in the movie as Cin Drallig (you figure it out).



STAR WARS: EPISODE III REVENGE OF THE SITH

THE END OF AN ERA

Pity the *Star Wars* fan. Come May 19, it's all over. With the theatrical release of *Star Wars: Episode III The Revenge of the Sith*, the greatest film saga of all time will officially come to an end. A long theatrical run and DVDs notwithstanding, *Star Wars* fans will soon have to look elsewhere for their Force fix.

That elsewhere is likely to be gaming. LucasArts, longtime publisher of *Star Wars* games, has proven over time its ability to enhance and expand that universe. Now in its most crucial *Star Wars* year ever, LucasArts is releasing several games across all platforms.

One of these is the obligatory game based on the movie. The LucasArts game, *Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith*, is being released with much fanfare a couple of weeks before the film. It's being developed by the reliable hand of The Collective, whose previous games based on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Indiana Jones* were modest critical and financial successes, so there's little doubt *Star Wars* gaming fans will have some actual fun. It's not surprising then that the unfortunately abbreviated *ROTS* is a third-person action brawler chock-full of intense lightsaber duels and some intriguing Force powers, like Force Stun, Sith Lightning, and the ubiquitous Jedi Mind Trick. You'll play as Darth Vader-to-be Anakin Skywalker and his mentor Obi-Wan Kenobi in a story that weaves in and out of the events of *Episode III*.

Having to choose between the light and dark sides of the Force has become standard issue in *Star Wars* games, and *ROTS* stays the course. Depending on the path and character you play, gameplay changes slightly. It's no secret that Obi-Wan is strong in the light side and Anakin is stronger when he gives in to the dark side, but the difference lies in how these actually play out. The light/dark dynamic also determines who your enemies are. Mace Windu, Count Dooku, and Darth Vader variously appear as foes.

At the heart of *ROTS* is the lightsaber. The number of attacks and combos are so deep thanks to consultant Nick Gillard, primary lightsaber trainer on the *ROTS* film (see sidebar). The game features literally dozens of lightsaber moves, most of which you won't see in the film.

> THE GAME FEATURES LITERALLY DOZENS OF LIGHTSABER MOVES.

The *ROTS* game experience tops off with the John Williams score, movie sound effects from Skywalker Sound, and 16 levels that include film-based locales as well as new ones like Utapau and the volcanic world of Mustafar (nope, no Hoth level).

LucasArts has announced a ship date of May 5, exactly two weeks before the movie hits theaters. The company really ought to consider moving it up one day.

May the fourth be with you.

Pub. LucasArts **Dev.** The Collective **Release** May 5

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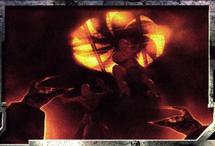

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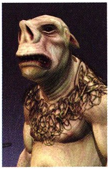
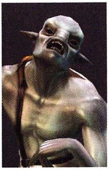
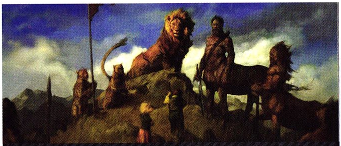






KNOW YOUR CHRONICLES

A NARNIA PRIMER

You say you have no clue what all the hoopla is surrounding *The Chronicles of Narnia*? Here are brief summaries of all seven books in the series. You're likely to find all the books available together in a boxed set, and they're all short, easy reads. Despite the heady plot and themes, C.S. Lewis originally wrote the *Chronicles* for children.

THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE

Four siblings (Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy) are sent to the country to live with old Professor Kirke during the London air raids of World War II. While playing hide-and-seek, they find a wardrobe through which they discover Narnia—and an adventure they never could have imagined.

PRINCE CASPIAN

The four kids have now become great kings and queens in Narnia and return to help Prince Caspian defeat his evil uncle.

THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER

Edmund, Lucy, and their cousin Eustace steer a magic ship through the monster-infested seas of Narnia.

THE SILVER CHAIR

Eustace and his friend Jill set off to find Rilian, Prince Caspian's missing—and possibly captured—son. Along the way, they meet talking owls, marshwiggles, and a witch.

THE HORSE AND HIS BOY

Taking place during the reign of the four kids who are now adult kings and queens in Narnia, this is the story of Shasta and his horse Bree, who are on the run from the evil Calormens. They must reach Narnia before the Calormen cavalry can catch them.

THE MAGICIAN'S NEPHEW

Two English children, Polly Plummer and Digory Kirke (who grows up to be the Professor), are the first to stumble upon Narnia.

THE LAST BATTLE

It's Narnia's final battle with the evil Calormens. Narnia is victorious, but is destroyed and replaced with a new, improved Narnia.

HARDCORE NARNIA

The *Chronicles* were published in the order that C.S. Lewis wrote them. If you want to read the series in its chronological order, read them like this: *Magician's Nephew*; *Lion, Witch, and Wardrobe*; *Horse and his Boy*; *Prince Caspian*; *Dawn Treader*; *Silver Chair*, and *Last Battle*.

THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA

THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE

EXPERIENCE NARNIA FIRSTHAND

The great religious scholar, novelist, medievalist, and literary critic C.S. Lewis wrote his classic *Chronicles of Narnia* series in part as a Christian allegory. Aslan the lion—through dying and then rising from the dead—plays the Christ figure; the boy Edmund gets to be the "Eve" who is enticed into evilness by the Satan-like White Witch. The tasty Turkish delight takes the role of the apple. The list goes on.

You're probably more familiar with the seven-book *Chronicles of Narnia* as the epic story of the Pevensies, four London brothers and sisters who are sent to the safety of the country home of the kindly Professor Kirke during the devastation of World War II. There they discover a magic wardrobe that transports them to the fantastical world of Narnia, an at-first cold and wintry land of talking animals, warring witches, and mythical beasts like centaurs and fauns.

Walt Disney Studios is readying for a December release of a live-action film based on the first *Narnia* novel, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Directed by Andrew Adamson (*Shrek, Shrek 2*), the film contains special effects courtesy of the Oscar-winning Weta Workshop, the FX masters behind the *Lord of the Rings* films.

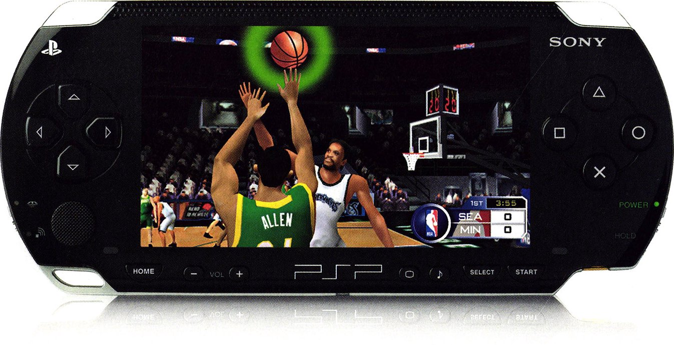
Given the serious, high-minded, and deeply intellectual nature of the books and the reverence with which the film appears to be made, it's hard to imagine what Mr. Lewis would think of the game version of the world he created. Developed for the PS2 by Traveller's Tales (*Haven: Call of the King, Crash Bandicoot: Twinsanity*) and for the PSP by Gryptonite Games (aka Amaze), *LWW* is a *Gauntlet*-like team action-adventure. Its four heroes—Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy—band together level after level, slaying or being slain by evil beasts that work for the terrible White Witch. Sure, sword battles and range weapons are typical in games like this, but it's a little weird to see Lucy picked up by her feet and flung around like a weapon, or thrown beneath a water wheel as the solution to a puzzle. Is this how Mr. Lewis envisioned his Narnia would be interpreted?

Right, it doesn't matter. If *LWW* is going to work as a game, it needs to include plenty of action, and despite a few oddities, Traveller's Tales seems to be delivering. The nicely detailed 3D environments, huge landscapes, and team gameplay are reminiscent of the *LOTR* action games from EA. Two players can join to control all four characters. You can switch characters on the fly as needed, and you can combine two characters to form a more powerful force. For instance, you can have Lucy get on Susan's back for a potent range/close quarters combo.

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE WHAT MR. LEWIS WOULD THINK OF THE GAME.

It's unknown what other game possibilities the developers explored, but the potential is certainly vast (a *Narnia* RPG anyone?). With seven books in the *Narnia* series, there's the likelihood of seven films, which logically extrapolates to at least seven games. C.S. Lewis' fairy-tale classic has a long life still ahead.

Pub. Disney Interactive **Dev.** Traveller's Tales, Gryptonite Games **Release** Fall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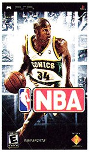

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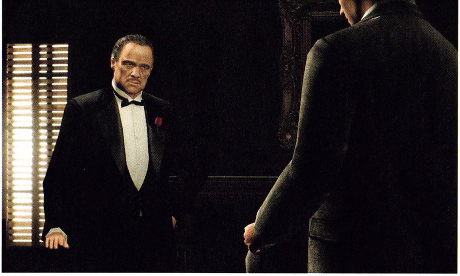

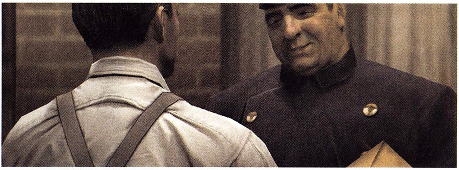

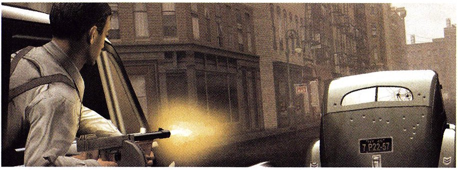

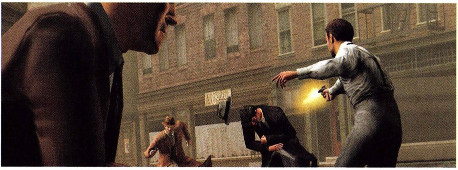

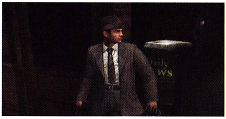

THE GODFATHER: THE GAME

YOU WANT I SHOULD CARE LESS?

The scene for *The Godfather: The Game* world premiere was plucked right from the first *Godfather* film: Gravelly voiced ape-sized Italian men with hams for hands guarded the doorways, Italian melodies slid from speakers, stunning high-heel-clad Italian women strolled through the room, and, of course, actors Robert Duvall and James Caan (whose voices will be in the game) were there.

EA's New York City event went down at Little Italy's Il Cortile, a dimly lit mob-styled hangout rife with big-screen televisions, press from all around the world, and the ultimately forgettable debut of a game that is a highly anticipated adaptation of one of cinema's most beloved films.

The event featured clips from the first *Godfather* film and a handful of five- to 15-second video clips of prerendered gameplay showing off a sprawling 1945 New York. After a life of small-time jobs and petty thefts, you are welcomed into the Corleone family. Once you're part of America's most famous criminal organization, you'll engage in what has become pretty standard gaming fare: Carry out orders, earn respect, and rise to power. Here you'll work your way up the Mafia ranks in an attempt to take over the Big Apple and become the next Don.

Set in a sprawling, nonlinear space, the game offers up endless choices for taking care of Corleone business—use brutal violence, skillful diplomacy, or that ever-important mixture of both. You'll do run-of-the-mill mob hits, pull off bank heists, or just walk into a store and offer protection for a price (ah, good old-fashioned 1950s extortion!). Some of the events will even cross over with the film—though it's still not known if you'll have to saw off a horse's head. But it is known that your behavior will affect the outcome of the entire game. If you're a violent jackass, you'll get a reputation as such. If you're a controlled mobster, that will make a difference. If all goes well, you'll take down the game's five families: Tattaglia, Cuneo, Sollozzo, Brazini, and Stracci.

USE BRUTAL VIOLENCE OR SKILLFUL DIPLOMACY.

While the clips displayed great environments and solid character models, the game itself was too early along to really show anything. The film clips served to make everyone in the crowd wish they were watching the film instead of sitting through an early preview of the game. But still, a hopeful buzz swirled through Il Cortile when the main character threatened a butcher and later dealt a severe, crippling beating to a stool pigeon.

The Godfather's opening was frightfully early, but the one thing it did show off adequately is EA's new aim to be a force in the action-adventure genre. Certainly this game will be compared to *Grand Theft Auto*, and for good reason. *GTA* succeeded because of its open-ended gameplay and free-form world, and now EA is looking to capitalize using the same parameters, something that's not surprising from a company notorious for high-reward, low-risk game making.

Using a cinematic masterpiece and an underexposed era as a backdrop makes good sense, but the average gamer is 29 years old, which means most gamers weren't born till after the first two *Godfather* films (on which the game is based) were released. Will this offering do for games what the film did for cinema? Or will it be just another *GTA* carbon copy that's too pointless, too late? We'll all know when it releases later this year.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Redwood Shores **Release** Fall

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Game experience may change during online play.

*Online play not available on all platforms. INTERNET CONNECTION required for online play. PlayStation®2 online play requires Internet Connection, Network Adaptor (for PlayStation 2) and Memory Card (8MB) (for PlayStation 2) (each sold separately). Check platform box for online play.

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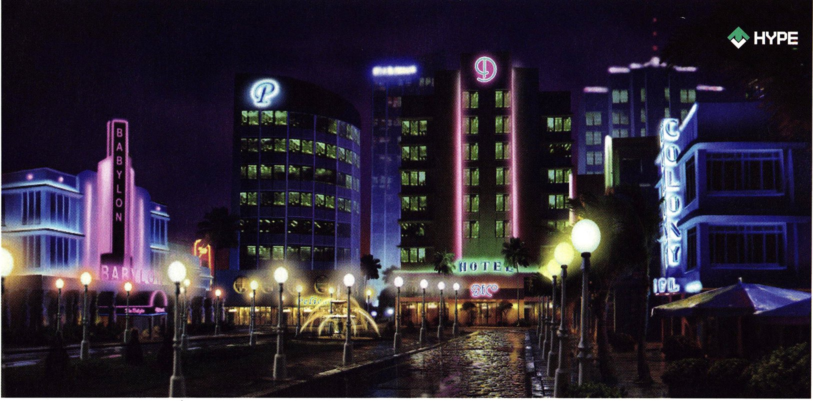

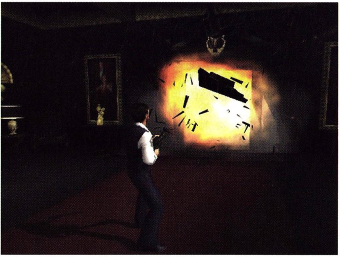

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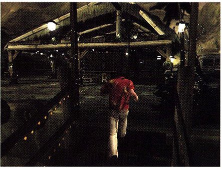
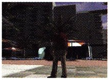
SERVICE





SCARFACE

COME, GREET HIS DIMINUTIVE COMPATRIOT!

If you haven't seen *Scarface* yet, well, you should probably bookmark this page and finally get around to watching it (you know, since it's been around for some 22 years). OK, you done yet? Really? Let's go.

So, the game begins with the movie's ending. You see the whole house siege in a mix of prerendered CG and in-game engine scenes, except this time, Tony Montana lives. Yep.

From then on, the player takes Al Pacino's place in the role of Tony and works to reestablish a cocaine empire. Tony's mansion is now the main hub, where he'll probably find missions, manage his funds and guns, and improve his weapons via minigames. Tony will hop into lots of cars and boats (he gets to venture outside Miami and even go as far as the Bahamas) and engage in a host of chases and attempts at vehicular homicide. Tony will also partake in missions for unsavory characters in order to acquire businesses and property to either launder money or provide some other drug-empire-enhancing service. And assuming you've seen the movie, you know that Tony has a tendency to get really angry—which is also reflected in the game. As expected, "blind rage" will let Tony do all sorts of crazy and nigh-impossible feats, and interestingly enough, Tony's "moral code of the streets" means that even in blind rage mode, he can't hurt women or children, only dudes who happen to be worse than he is.

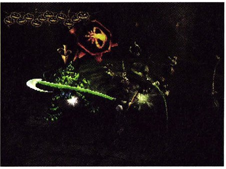
"BLIND RAGE" WILL LET TONY DO ALL SORTS OF NIGH-IMPOSSIBLE FEATS.

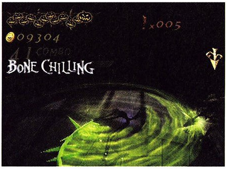
Talentwise, Vivendi reps are being really cagey, but we've heard that Pacino doesn't want to get involved in games and hence is absent from both *Scarface* and *The Godfather*. No other movie talent has been formally announced at press time, but a Vivendi representative comments, "Fans of the movie will be pleased." Who knows, maybe we'll get a virtual Robert Loggia!

Yeah, this game sounds a whole lot like some other game that involves vice charges and vehicular larceny. Then again, that other game isn't a bad one to be inspired by. One can also ponder the irony of this game cloning a game which itself was basically cloning the original *Scarface* movie. Hmm.

Pub. Vivendi Universal **Dev.** Radical **Release** Fall

09754
8 COMBO





DYNAMIC DUO
Disney and Capcom have teamed up in the past, working together on such classic games as *Aladdin* (Super NES, GBA), *Chip 'N Dale: Rescue Rangers* (NES), *DuckTales* (NES, Game Boy), and *Darkwing Duck* (NES).

TIM BURTON'S

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS: OOGIE BOOGIE'S REVENGE

CAPCOM AND DISNEY REUNITED

It's a bit amusing that despite people citing *Nightmare Before Christmas* as Tim Burton's best film, he did not actually direct it—he was the producer and provided the inspiration, but he wasn't the actual director. So debates about his best film are limited to nominating *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* or *Batman*. But that won't stop us from being pleasantly surprised by a game based on one of his better ideas-turned-film.

To start off, this *Nightmare Before Christmas* story is a sequel, not a rehash. Basically, the story is that Oogie Boogie didn't get put down enough last time, and he's managed to concoct a zany plan that involves kidnapping the mayors of the other holiday towns and making himself the King of Seven Holidays. Most of the game takes place in and around Halloweentown; while a few levels will look like sets from the movie, the developers were free to extrapolate what the rest of the land outside Halloweentown would look like. (Think of the resulting levels as kid-friendly versions of the environments you'd find in *Devil May Cry 3*.) Also, near the end of the game, Jack will get to venture outside of Halloweentown and even revisit Christmastown.

For a refresher, the game is basically a third-person action-adventure. Jack zips around the levels fighting baddies with his Soul Robber (a green goo that acts like a whip at times). Or, he can change costumes to become either Pumpkin Jack (complete with flaming head and fire-based attacks) or Santa Jack (who uses ice-based attacks to stun enemies). Besides jumping and fighting, you also have to solve the occasional puzzle—pretty standard fare so far. Until you get to the boss battles.

The rhythm-based boss battles are simultaneously the most bizarre and the most appropriate aspect of *Nightmare*. They are pretty strange because they'd feel a little out of place in a typical third-person action-adventure, yet they're entirely appropriate, given that the original film is a stop-motion musical. Basically, while you're dealing with the boss in a normal fashion, you can string together combo attacks to trigger a rhythm-based sequence that will deal major damage. Of course, while you're matching the buttons, Jack is usually dancing and singing about the fight. During the boss fight in which you try to replace Dr. Finklestein's brain, you dodge Finklestein's contraptions and try to get his evil brain out of his head, and when you do a combo, Jack busts out a melody about why the good doctor is suddenly an evil doctor.

WHILE YOU'RE MATCHING BUTTONS, JACK IS DANCING AND SINGING.

It's still a bit odd to see a game based on an 11-year-old movie, but if it's anything like Capcom's previous forays into quality Disney games, it could be a return to form.

Pub. Buena Vista Games **Dev.** Capcom **Release** October 11

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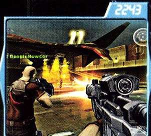
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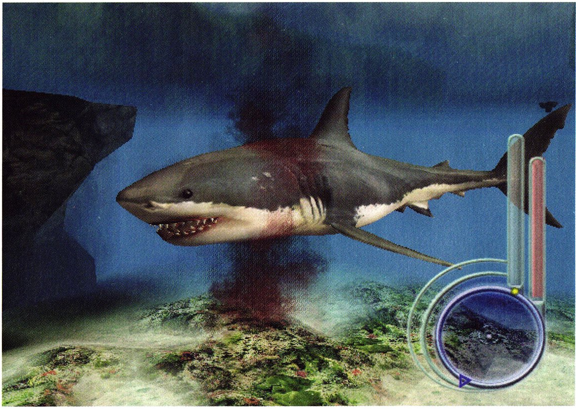
JAWS

ALAS, NO LASERS HERE

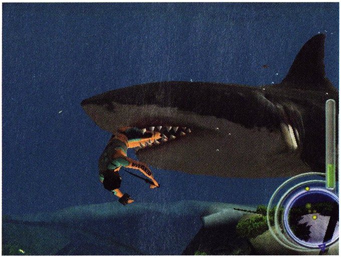


Jaws has some crazy significance in the film world, ranging from it being one of the architects of the modern blockbuster formula to being the supposed influence behind *Alien* (it was reported that a studio exec pitched *Alien* as "*Jaws* in space"). Now it can add "ultragory version of *Ecco the Dolphin*" to its list of accomplishments.

Appaloosa, the developer of *Ecco the Dolphin*, has managed to graft a crazy *Jaws*-related story line onto its core game of shark simulating. Apparently, you ate the son of the CEO of Environplus, a new company that has situated itself on Amity Island. So, of course, the CEO swears bloody revenge (much like Bill Murray's character, Steve Zissou, does in *The Life Aquatic*) and hires a shark hunter to go after you. In another connection to the original *Jaws*, Mike Brody (son of Martin Brody, the sheriff played by Roy "*SeaQuest DSV*" Scheider in the first *Jaws*) is going to try to capture you. We can only hope that Mike sports the likeness of Dennis Quaid, who played him in *Jaws 3-D*.

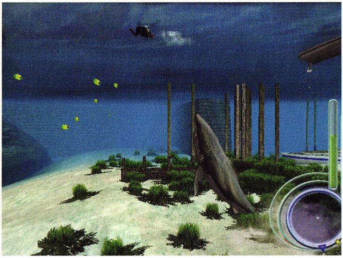
Though the movie connections seem bizarre, this game aims to be quite sharktacular—each character has 25 points of dismemberment, and you can literally tear people into multiple floating flesh nuggets. There's a story mode, but we will probably prefer the free-roaming island mode. In addition to just finding victims and stuffing them into your thousand-toothed maw, there will be stealth missions, bonus destruction objectives, and chase sequences. Bosses include really big boats and killer whales, which means you can seriously bet on the outcome of a *Free Willy*–versus–*Jaws* pay-per-view spectacular.

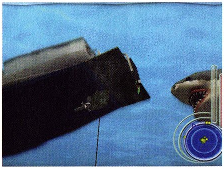
YOU CAN LITERALLY TEAR PEOPLE INTO FLOATING FLESH NUGGETS.

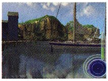


We could jabber on and on about a host of other features, but really, all you need to know is that you play a shark and you tear stuff apart with your mouth. Much as how *Jaws* was one of the architects of modern cinema, this game might become the blueprint for modern predatory-animal action games.

Pub. Majesco **Dev.** Appaloosa **Release** August







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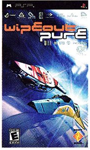

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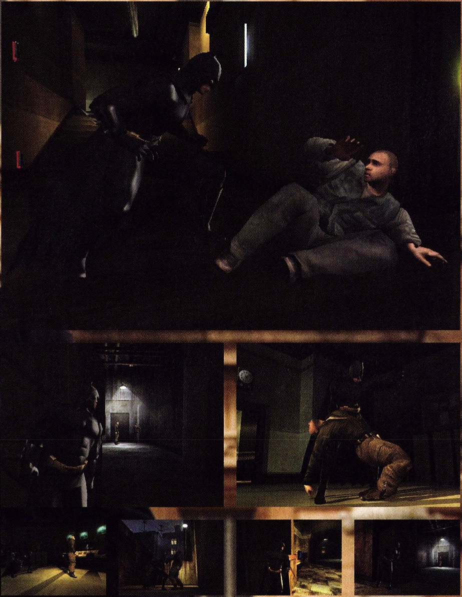


BATMAN BEGINS

FIVE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CHRISTIAN BALE AND BATMAN

1 He and the rest of the major cast members (Michael Caine, Morgan Freeman, Liam Neeson, and others) are now voicing the game. We're not sure whether this is the result of numerous hats of money being passed to them or the WB realizing it needs to work more closely with its partners when it comes to making games (à la Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment president Jason Hall's comments in *OPM* Issue #88).

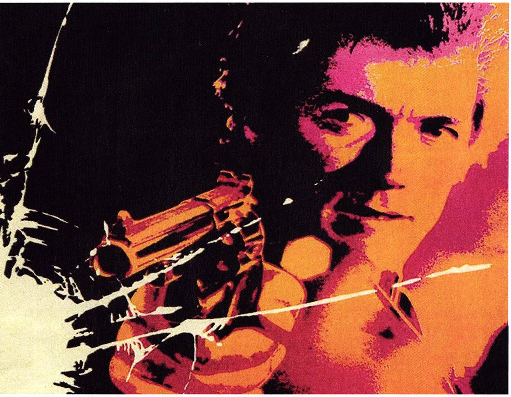
2 Bale can't just recycle the same lines and routines he memorized for the film. Since the game has to be longer than the movie, the developers had JT Petty (the writer of the *Splinter Cell* franchise) expand the movie's story. Scenes that were a mere 15 minutes or so in the film are now one- to two-hour levels, so Bale had more to read and say.

3 Bale on the essence of Batman: "[He] is the most interesting [character] of them all, you know? I mean, he's the really on-the-edge one because he's the guy that, OK, he's doing good but he's the Dark Knight. I mean, a knight is meant to be in shining armor, and he's the Dark Knight. He could do good things, but man, he could just as easily flip over and become like the ultimate villain. Think about the obsession that somebody must have to retain the pain and anger from an incident that happened 20 years previously and is still in the forefront of his mind. You know that's an incredible obsession. I mean, that's an unhealthy obsession. I think probably some psychiatrists would say [he's mentally ill] for hanging on to that pain intentionally, keeping hold of it and letting it rule much of his life."

4 His favorite graphic novels include *Arkham Asylum* ("I got offered *Arkham Asylum*, and read it, and was really intrigued by it because it was nothing like it seemed [to be] in the TV series"), *Batman: Year One*, *The Long Halloween*, and *Dark Victory.* "I had [all the graphic novels] on the set with me all the time just because I loved the imagery so much."

5 His favorite Bat gadget? "What do you think? The car. It has to be because they've done such a radically different thing with it. What I love about it is that aesthetically it kicks ass. It looks f***ing stunning." He goes on to share his favorite Batmobile anecdote: "There was even this guy who crashed into it. This poor drunken guy who didn't have a license, who said he got so panicked when he saw the car he thought aliens were landing and he put the pedal to the metal. I wasn't in it—it was the stunt driver driving it at the time. He put the pedal to the metal and sideswiped the Batmobile." We hope that incident is an Easter egg in the game.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** Eurocom **Release** June



DIRTY HARRY

THE LAW IS ON THE LOOSE

The rogue cop became a staple in modern pop culture before most of *OPM*'s readers (and writers) were born; the genre's definitive work came in 1971 with the release of *Dirty Harry*, starring Clint Eastwood. Eastwood's San Francisco cop wormed his way into the heart of America with such famous catchphrases as "Do you feel lucky, punk?" and "Go ahead, make my day."

Dirty Harry was the prototype for the steely attitude, the do-the-right-thing-by-any-means methodology that became the blueprint for the American hero over the next few decades. (Granted, this eventually deteriorated into the Schwarzenegger/Stallone action blockbusters of the late '80s and early '90s, but who can blame Clint for the future?) So it seems only fitting that the prototype for so many heroes—including game vigilantes Max Payne and Duke Nukem—gets his own game.

EASTWOOD WILL LEND HIS VOICE TO THE TITULAR CHARACTER.

While five *Dirty Harry* films were made, this game will have its own original story. Eastwood will lend his voice to the titular character, and his studio, Malpaso Productions, will help produce the game. Malpaso Productions has plenty of Academy Award–winning films under its belt (*Unforgiven*, *Mystic River*, and this year's best-picture winner, *Million Dollar Baby*), but this will be the studio's first game collaboration (the developer itself hasn't been announced). However, whoever the developer is, there's pressure for it to hit a home run the first time out—Warner Bros. Interactive itself will be the publisher. This means that *Dirty Harry* most likely falls under the jurisdiction of Warner's new policy dictating that critically unsuccessful games be slapped with a financial penalty. We'll see how well Warner polices itself.

Don't expect to see Harry patrolling the block for a while—predictions put this on next-gen consoles, which means the very earliest we'll see it is at the PlayStation 3 launch sometime in 2006.

Pub. Warner Bros. Interactive **Dev.** TBD **Release** 2006

"JUST SAY NO, PUNK"

Dirty Harry actually made a previous console appearance in 1990's NES game *Dirty Harry: The War Against Drugs*. The game featured sound clips from the first film and was conceived during the late '80s as part of Nancy Reagan's reign of terror.

RESERVOIR DOGS

GOING BACK TO THE WELL

One can only imagine the scene in 2K Games' boardroom.

"EA's doing a *Godfather* game."

"Really? What can we do? How about *Scarface*?"

"Vivendi's already got that license."

"Crap. How about *Married to the Mob*?"

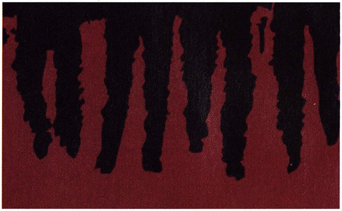
"...."

"Oh...yeah. So, you think *Reservoir Dogs* is available?"

OK, so we don't know what really led to 2K Games picking up the *Reservoir Dogs* license. It could just be that Quentin Tarantino's directing debut is full of badass dudes who could make for some really great game characters. We know that gamers the world over have been begging to see a virtual version of Steve Buscemi's tip-stinting Mr. Pink for more than a decade. (OK, so maybe we're projecting.)

If this is just an extension of the EA Sports–2K Games rivalry, however, it will be a while before we can find out for ourselves—*Reservoir Dogs* is slated as a 2006 (read: next-gen) release. But if both *Godfather* and *Scarface* tank, our bet is that *Reservoir Dogs* won't make it to a console until the next time we hit a golden gaming renaissance of classic movie licenses.

Pub. 2K Games **Dev.** TBD **Release** 2006



KING KONG

THE ULTIMATE IN SOCIAL CLIMBING

Given the millions of dollars EA Games has made on the five games it milked from the *Lord of the Rings* movie licenses, it's no shock that Ubisoft snapped up the license for Peter Jackson's latest directing project, *King Kong*. Ubisoft has so far been very tight-lipped about the project, not even saying whether movie leads Naomi Watts, Jack Black, and Adrien Brody will provide voice work. However, it has confirmed that the development team for 2003's critically acclaimed *Beyond Good & Evil* (headed by *Rayman* bigwig Michel Ancel himself) is making the game. Look for this to show up on the PS2 sometime during the crowded holiday season.

Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Ubisoft **Release** Q4 2005

VIRTUAL BOY

Andy Serkis, who is best known for providing the voice and modeling for the *Lord of the Rings*' CG Gollum, will provide both the voice and the modeling for *King Kong*'s leading CG simian.

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

A WORLD OF PURE IMAGINATION

Color us cynical. That's not a slam against the High Voltage development team in particular, but given game publishers' tendency to spit out fetch-quest games for licenses taken from kids' movies (see this month's review of *Robots* on page 96), we're not holding out a lot of hope for this summer release. It's possible that part of our skepticism comes from the fact that we don't think the Tim Burton–Johnny Depp project can hold up to the original Gene Wilder production, but most of it stems from the fact that there are very few kid-movie licenses that haven't been squandered by greedy publishers looking for a quick buck from parents hoping to shut their kids up for a few hours.

Pub. 2K Games **Dev.** High Voltage **Release** July

THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO

NEO WHO?

Enter the Matrix dodged a big bullet. The project was conceived as the story behind the story of the *Matrix* trilogy, and it was heavily influenced by the input of the Wachowski brothers...er, siblings. While the blockbuster game was one of the biggest titles of 2003 (with almost 6 million units sold), it endured a hailstorm of withering criticism, which would have made it a ripe target under the new regime of "Quality Now!" mandated by Warner Bros. Interactive.

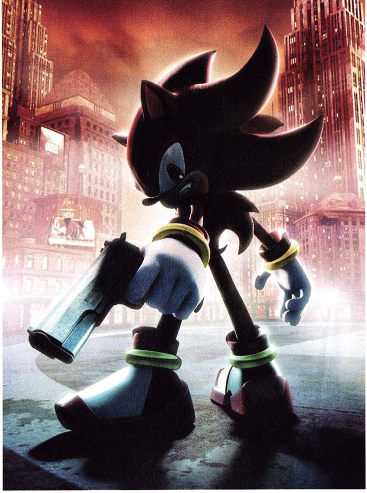
That now-infamous policy will take a big slug out of Atari's earnings if Shiny Entertainment's new project, *The Matrix: Path of Neo*, doesn't get reviewed more favorably than its predecessor did. The game draws source material from both the movie trilogy and the award-winning *Animatrix* shorts, this time following (as you might have guessed) the fate of Neo rather than minor movie character Niobe, who was the star of *Enter the Matrix*. You'll see the likenesses of all the films' major stars, and the Wachowskis will again be directly involved with the game's development...uh, yay?

The million-dollar question, however, is whether gamers still care—while critical success will prevent a financial penalty, that will be cold comfort if the commercial side doesn't pan out. Currently, the title is scheduled for a holiday release, although it will be no shock if Atari's shaky financial status (the publisher recently closed two of its three U.S. offices) bumps this one out past its projected release date.

Pub. Atari **Dev.** Shiny Entertainment **Release** Q4 2005

REVENGE OF THE HEDGEHOG

SEGA STEPS UP WITH TWO BIG ANNOUNCEMENTS



Sega has revealed yet another game in its long-running *Sonic the Hedgehog* series, *Shadow the Hedgehog*. Yes, as you can probably guess, the main character isn't Sonic this time around but rather Shadow, the both angsty and extreme (he does, after all, have a red stripe) hedgehog who first appeared in *Sonic Adventure 2*. And guess what, kids? He has a gun! Yes, that's right. Sega has decided to equip Shadow with a gun that he can use to shoot various targets within the environment, and it even seems that you can find different guns as you progress through the game, somewhat similar to what you would find in the *Jak* and *Ratchet* games.

We're a little concerned about Sega going this route with its *Sonic* series, but the company may make up for it with its acquisition of Creative Assembly—the development house behind the *Total War* games for the PC. Creative Assembly has already been charged with developing a new console game loosely based on that series. The game, called *Spartan: Total Warrior*, is a beat-em-up in the same vein as Koei's *Dynasty Warriors* titles. There will be a variety of different environments set against the backdrop of ancient Greece. Both *Shadow the Hedgehog* and *Spartan: Total Warrior* are scheduled for release later this year. «

THE WATCHDOG

RATING THE IMPLICATIONS

JOHN SCALZI
is our man keeping an eye on things for the benefit of all gamers. You can see more of his thoughts at www.scalzi.com.

The ESRB—they're the people who rate videogames, if for some unfathomable reason you don't know that yet—have debuted a new rating: E10+, which sits in between the "E for everyone" and "T for teens" ratings and indicates a game is suitable for ages 10 and up. I have a problem with this new rating, which is that I think the name stinks; "E10+" is a contradiction in terms. If a game is for everyone, adding a modifier belies that. In my opinion, the rating should be "P" for "preteen."

That's my only objection, however. Otherwise, I think it's a fine idea, and it shows that there are some brains engaged over at the ESRB. How? Let us count the ways:

1. A new rating gives parents more information and makes it easier for them to choose games they want for their kids. As gamers, you want that. The more information parents have through a voluntary industry rating system (and the easier it is for them to understand that system), the less call there will be to have government step in and attempt to regulate games and game sales—or at the very least, the less likely it will be that such attempts will gain traction when they arise.

2. It allows gamemakers to more accurately classify games. There are probably some T games whose content did not actually merit the rating but weren't exactly a clean fit for E, either. Likewise, there are probably games rated E that will give more sensitive parents pause. An intermediate rating gives a definite place for those "iffy" games and allows the industry to better define the E and T categories—and to say that T really does mean a game is for teens. This makes it easier for parents to fend off the kids saying things like, "It's rated T but it's really for everyone." And again—anything that helps parents helps the industry.

3. It's good PR. The average gamer is well into adulthood, but the perception at large remains that videogames are a kid-oriented business. Whether that's true or not, it's in the interest of the game industry to be perceived as tending to the kids. If the industry is smart, it can use this to point out that the ESRB ratings not only address parental concerns but also represent the companies' actual market segments: The reason there's a market for M games, for example, is that there are mature people playing games, not just kids.

ANYTHING THAT HELPS PARENTS HELPS THE VIDEOGAME INDUSTRY.

Now let's be realistic: The addition of a single ESRB rating will not usher in a new era of love and peace and nonstupidity—people will continue to put the game industry in their gun sights, and undoubtedly the industry will deserve to be there from time to time. It's a small step for parents, for games, and for the industry. The thing is, if you take enough small steps, eventually you'll get somewhere. «

SONY
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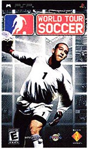

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MIZUGUCHI

SOUND VISION

TETSUYA MIZUGUCHI, CREATOR OF REZ AND LUMINES, DROPS BEATS ON THE FUTURE OF THE VIDEOGAME INDUSTRY

OPM How difficult was it to set up a new company, get projects going, and get publishers to look at them?

TETSUYA MIZUGUCHI I was at Sega a year and a half ago and [right when I started the company] we had very few people. Now, we have almost 20 people, but we had to start with a small team and come up with a fresh idea. We got news from Sony about the PSP and thought, "Wow, this is a new medium and a new technology." It's almost like a new Walkman, so we thought we needed to make a very simple game but focus on the music experience, like [we did with] *Rez*. Then we thought, OK, let's make a puzzle game, something that everyone can play and something that was easy to learn. We conducted many experiments and had a few different prototypes, and we eventually brought one of the prototypes to the Bandai people. I know some of the Bandai people very well, so they were very interested in our idea. That was the point where we finally decided to build the game, but the whole process was very smooth. And we didn't have the PSP hardware at the time, so we made *Lumines* on the PC and then ported it over.

OPM How did you come up with the initial idea for *Lumines*? Did you think you had to build it around a certain idea?

TM The basic concept comes from *Rez* because of the sound and music, but *Rez* is different because it's a shooter with many [visual elements] and vibration. [Laughs] With *Lumines*, we wanted to make something that was much more casual. If I played *Rez* once, I'd want to keep playing for a really long time in one place, but since the PSP is like a Walkman, it makes you want to play for just 10 or so minutes when you're on a plane or on a train. The style is also different from *Rez*.

OPM *Lumines* isn't the flashiest PSP game in terms of graphics, but it's one of the best. Is there a message there that great games don't need a lot of flash to be successful?

TM Maybe, yes. If you can make gorgeous video and gorgeous sound but not make [a good game], then it's basically trash. To me, game design or the game experience is like chemistry with video and sounds. So I look at something, I act on it, and look at it again and act on it—it's a very interactive experience. So when there's chemistry, there's an [upward spiral], but if you think something is boring, then it's the opposite. Games are kind of like art in that way in that we want to make a strong emotional link to all of the elements—music and video.

OPM So would you say that you design a game based around what you like and hope people will like it or do you always take the gaming public into consideration?

TM Games themselves are not necessarily art, but the process of making them is similar. I'm always watching customers, and those customers seem very similar to me. I can't completely understand the type of game that everyone will like. But maybe if I understand myself, then other people will understand. You also have to think about what kinds of people play PSP games and what kinds of people are looking for a new experience.

OPM Do you think that since companies are focusing more on the bottom line that it's stifling creativity in the industry?

TM Big companies can't take a risk anymore. They have many internal people and have to use that talent anyway and they think, "OK, we just have to create something." I think that's not a good part of the process, and that's why I wanted to start my own company. Times are changing. The organization within companies is changing. *Lumines* was made with just five people, including myself, which made it easier to create. Plus, most companies just make sequels or just port games from the PS2 over to the PSP. Not very many games are fresh or original, and most of the companies just view the PSP as a branch of the PS2. It's really sad.

> "BIG COMPANIES CAN'T TAKE A RISK ANYMORE."

OPM The next-generation consoles obviously offer more power—what do you think is going to be the next big thing or where is the next major advance going to come from?

TM It will be in AI and physics. There's going to be a lot more science around game development. I need more science, not only from a pure technology standpoint, but also for managing projects—there's a science behind that, too. Once we do that, then we can figure out how to work on the bigger projects. Without that, we can't make a good game. «

Illustration by sixstation.com

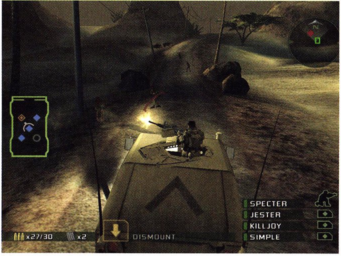
SOCOM 3: U.S. NAVY SEALS

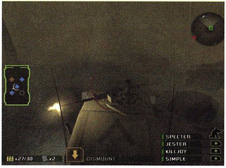
SOLO PLAY STEPS INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

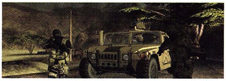
TERRORISTS

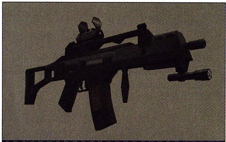
SWAMP THING

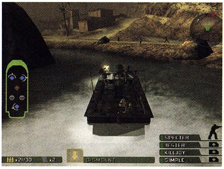
In response to thousands of player requests, Zipper is adding a ghillie suit to *SOCOM 3* in the form of an unlockable character (who will *not* be easy to unlock, incidentally). The character will sport a different suit depending on the foliage found in the selected level.

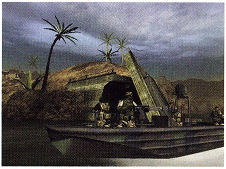


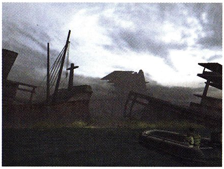


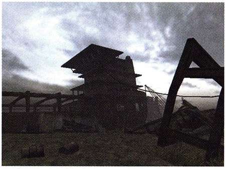












SEE THE WORLD

SOCOM 3 takes place in three all-new areas of operation: the sun-drenched streets of Morocco, the dense jungles of Bangladesh, and the idyllic countryside and thick forests of Poland. Yes, we said Poland. Shut up.

SCOPE THIS

BUILD YOUR OWN NOOB-TOOB

***SOCOM 3* introduces** a completely new system for equipping your SEALs. Instead of picking from a preset loadout of weapons, you can build your own. You pick from more than 30 stock weapons and add on your choice of more than 20 attachments (two attachments for your primary weapon, one for your secondary). For example, let's say you like the power of the M14, but you're looking for something a little stealthier. Just slap a suppressor on there and you're good to go; you could even add any of a number of scopes to make it a true long-range weapon. Or let's say you're not concerned about stealth, but you'd like to make the rifle a little more accurate. Replace that suppressor with a pistol grip to help bring down the recoil. Get the idea?

You'll also be able to choose from items such as grenade launchers, laser sights, bipods (which dramatically improve aim), and even flashlights for lighting up dark areas. But you'll want to choose carefully: Every item you add to your gun makes it heavier, which makes it harder to aim quickly. Furthermore, the heavier the weapon you're carrying, the slower you'll move—no longer will you be able to run full tilt and leap a fence while lugging around an M60E3. So you'll need to find the combination of attachments and weapons that works for your playing style.

"Our No. 1 competition is our last game," says Travis Steiner, lead designer for *SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs*. "We feel we need to raise the bar from what we did in *SOCOM II*." That's not an easy task. *SOCOM II* is one of the most popular games on the PS2—so popular that 30,000 unique users continue to go online to play the game every day, a year and a half after its release. In fact, the game is so well known that 60 percent of applicants to the Navy's SEALs program say they applied because of *SOCOM*—and 100 percent say they're familiar with the game, according to Jim Bosler, president of *SOCOM* developer Zipper Interactive. That makes crafting a solid sequel a very big deal.

Luckily, Zipper appears to be up to the task. Not content to coast on the success of the first two games, the studio is implementing a huge array of significant additions and improvements. Take, for example, the hugely expanded levels: Missions will now take place in areas that are as much as six times the size of the average *SOCOM II* level. (Don't worry, to compensate for the vastly increased level size, Zipper has finally added a checkpoint system.) The larger size is due in part to a restructuring of the way the game handles memory; a new streaming process allows the designers to create larger, more detailed, more dynamic scenes with a longer view distance than we saw in the last game.

Furthermore, the levels themselves are joined together in a much more believable fashion. "You'll play one area, get into an extraction vehicle, like an armored personnel carrier, and get your next mission briefing while you're en route to the next mission area," Senior Producer Seth Luisi tells us. "Then you'll get out and play that next mission. So it's more of a seamless experience; it's not loading back to the [menu] and then going into a different mission." In other words, although there are still distinct missions, you won't have the disconnect between levels that you may be familiar with.

And how are you going to get around these huge areas, do you think? Well, how does a selection of drivable vehicles sound? That's right, you'll be able to pilot around 20 different vehicles—from SEAL-configured Humvees that will be part of your deployment to civilian pickups you'll find abandoned in the course of your mission. (And let's not forget about enemy vehicles; not only will you participate in vehicle-based combat, but you'll be able to swipe transportation from the terrorists should the need arise.) You can even split up your team into two different vehicles and direct Bravo team separately from your own Able team.

YOU'LL BE ABLE TO PILOT AROUND 20 DIFFERENT VEHICLES.

These vehicles aren't confined to the land. You will also have access to Navy and civilian watercraft, including the staggeringly well-armed SOCR assault boat. Like with all vehicles, you'll be able to switch positions in the

GET OUT OF MY DREAMS

...AND INTO MY M3A2 BRADLEY TANK

Here's a small sampling of *SOCOM 3*'s drivable vehicles.

M3A2 BRADLEY TANK

MULTITURRET SEAL-SPEC HUMVEE

SPECIAL OPERATIONS CRAFT RIVERINE (SOCR)

CUSTOMIZED CIVILIAN SUV

boat on the fly, driving while your teammates fire on enemies or manning the guns while directing the driver via *SOCOM*'s trademark voice-command system.

Oh, and don't worry if you happen to fall out of the boat—*SOCOM 3* now includes full support for swimming and water combat. Not only will you be able to cross previously impassable waterways, you'll also be able to use water for cover, ducking under and holding your breath as enemies pass by, oblivious.

Well, maybe not as oblivious as you might expect. That new memory-management technology we talked about earlier also allows for smarter enemies (not to mention more of them). You'll find the bad guys making better use of cover, working together more sensibly, and responding more quickly to threats. Furthermore, each enemy character will have a different rating for training and for "courage." Generally, a group of enemies will have a leader with the highest training and courage levels; he will shoot accurately and behave aggressively. But if you take him out, it will affect the courage rating of his followers, as well as deprive them of his advanced training—so they will respond both less intelligently and less aggressively. This adds a definite layer of complexity and strategy.

Fortunately, your computer-controlled teammates are also smarter: For example, they will now intelligently take up positions behind cover when they've reached a destination and even attempt to predict your path and move to covering positions. The designers are also making it easier to control your team by adding a context-sensitive Command button (think *Rainbow Six 3*) that lets you issue simple directives like "move there" or "open that" simply by pointing at the ground or at a door. The Command menu is also being redesigned, moving from the current nested-menu setup to a circular format that allows for quicker command selection.

You may have noticed that we've spent all this time talking only about the single-player mode. "What about multiplayer?" you're probably asking. The answer is that Zipper's not ready to show it yet. The reason for this is twofold: First, the team is doing its best to ensure that the single-player campaign is as interesting, varied, and accessible as online play. And second, by all indications, online play is due for as extensive an overhaul as the single-player mode is getting—one that will no doubt be deserving of its own preview once Zipper's ready to show it in a month or two. "We're definitely pushing multiplayer a lot further," Luisi tells us. "You saw a good jump between *SOCOM* and *SOCOM II*; you're going to see a much bigger jump between *SOCOM II* and *SOCOM 3*." «

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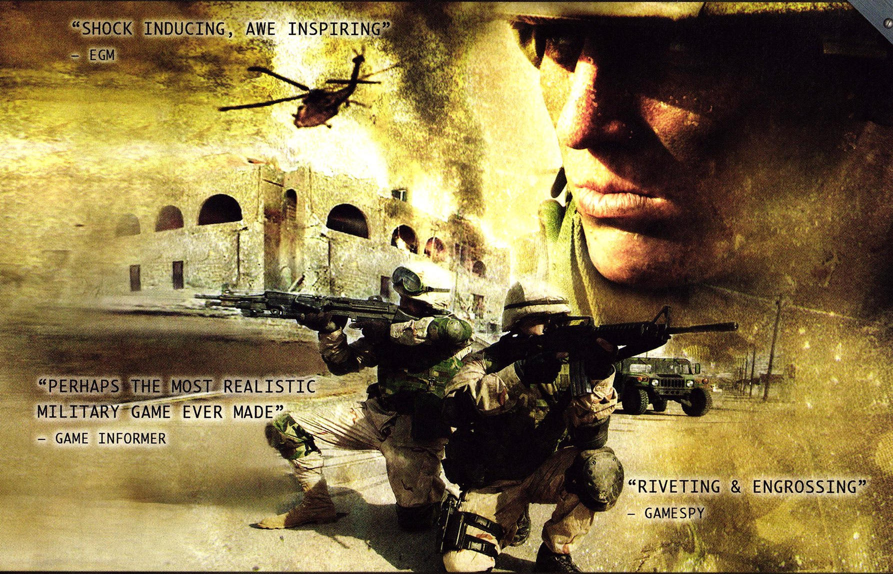
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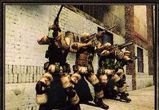

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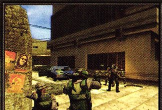

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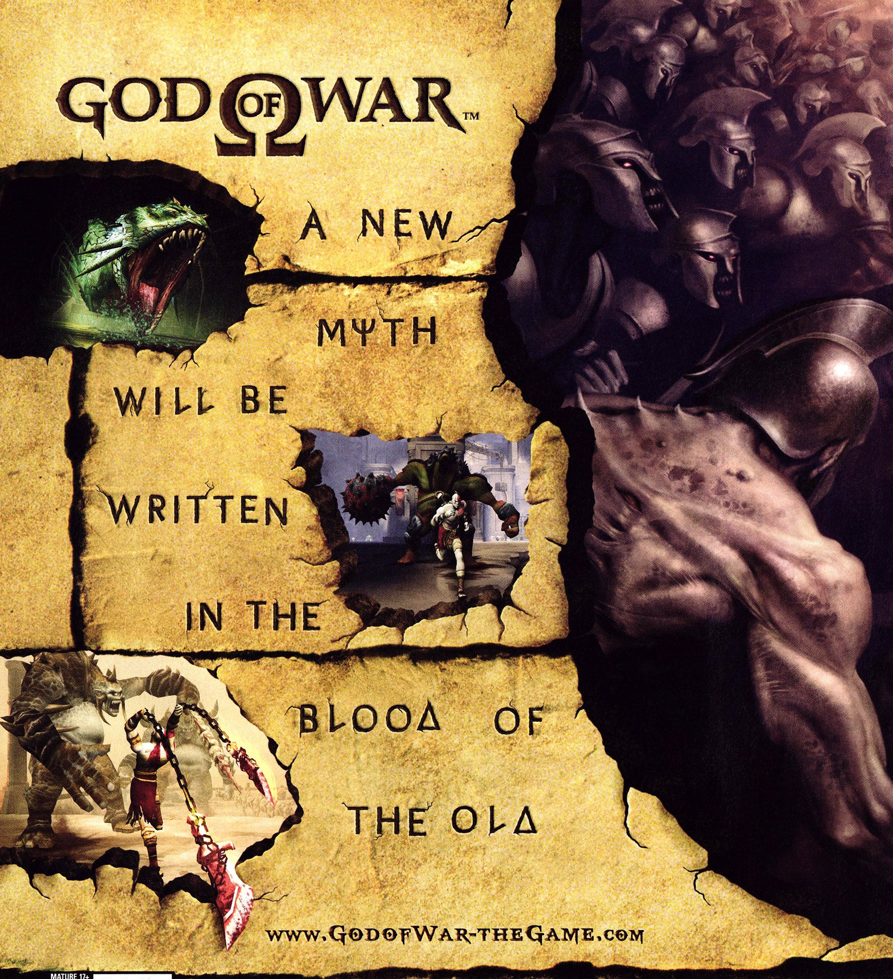
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DATA STREAM

THE NEWS IN BRIEF

GT4 ON THE APPRENTICE

"You're all fired" is what Donald Trump should've told contestants on the NBC reality show *The Apprentice.* Members of two marketing teams were charged with developing graffiti-style *Gran Turismo 4* ads that would be put on display in Harlem. One team went with a multienvironment approach that essentially looked like a clown splattered on the wall, while the other went with more of an urban look that had almost nothing to do with the game. Bravo, teams. Bravo…or not.

APPLE OF OUR EYE

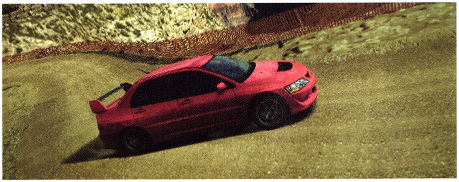
Apple, maker of computer hardware and the iPod, announced that it is joining the board of directors for the Blu-Ray consortium, a group of companies (including Sony) backing the next-generation HD-DVD technology. Apple plans to include Blu-Ray drives in its computer hardware and offer support for the format through its line of HD-compatible video encoding software. Sony plans to use the Blu-Ray format in the PlayStation 3 hardware as well, so the extra support from companies like Apple will only help make it the dominant format.

PS3 EASY

Despite the fact that the PlayStation 3 will use new technology (in the form of the Cell-based processor), Sony says that development for the PlayStation 3 will be easier for companies to deal with than they might initially think. Sony plans to release tools and offer software that will let developers jump into game design without worrying too much about spending time learning how the hardware works. Nvidia, the company behind the graphics chip powering the PlayStation 3, will also provide tools to developers to harness the chip's features.

GET YOUR PSP TO MARS

Looks like Lions Gate Films will be the first film studio (other than Sony Pictures) to come out of the gate with several UMD movies. The studio plans to release recent movies such as *Saw*, *Open Water*, and *The Punisher*, which will go on sale for around $20 to $30. Older movie releases, including *Total Recall*, *Young Guns*, and *Rambo: First Blood*, will also be available for $10 to $20. Brief note to the movie studios: If the UMD has less content than the DVD, then it's probably not a good idea to charge the same price. «



JAPANTOWN

WHO'S HARDCORE NOW?

ANDREW VESTAL
teaches English in the land of our friends to the East, and he doesn't mind that everyone thinks he's great at games.

Recently, Capcom released Devil May Cry 3 in the States to generally positive acclaim. But expensive continue orbs and a lack of midlevel checkpoints gave rise to complaints of a brutal, soul-destroying difficulty not seen since Ninja Gaiden. These concerns confused the hell out of Japanese gamers, who'd gotten the game two weeks beforehand—with frequent midlevel checkpoints and free continues, thank you very much. In an increasingly common trend amongst Japanese companies, Capcom had jacked up the U.S. version's difficulty. Normal became easy, hard became normal, and checkpoints and continues became a distant memory.

Years ago, the opposite was true. America's Final Fantasy IV was the lobotomized "Easy Type" version, while the insultingly simple Final Fantasy Mystic Quest was released in Japan under the embarrassing title Final Fantasy USA. Japanese games were routinely dumbed down and stripped of content for the U.S. market, and Japanese companies widely perceived American gamers as shallow, impatient, and easily distracted by shiny graphics—basically, ferrets with controllers.

But today, Americans are the ones sharpening their hardcore skills while Japanese gamers breeze through kid-safe versions of games. The Japanese Resident Evil 4's Easy mode was stripped out of the U.S. version. Americans playing the first two Metal Gear Solid games on Normal had the same experience as a Japanese gamer playing on Hard. Treasure, found in the dictionary next to the definition "hardcore Japanese developer," added a harder difficulty level to the U.S. version of Astro Boy: Omega Factor. Somehow, "Americans like hard games" has been hardwired into the minds of Japanese developers. How did this happen?

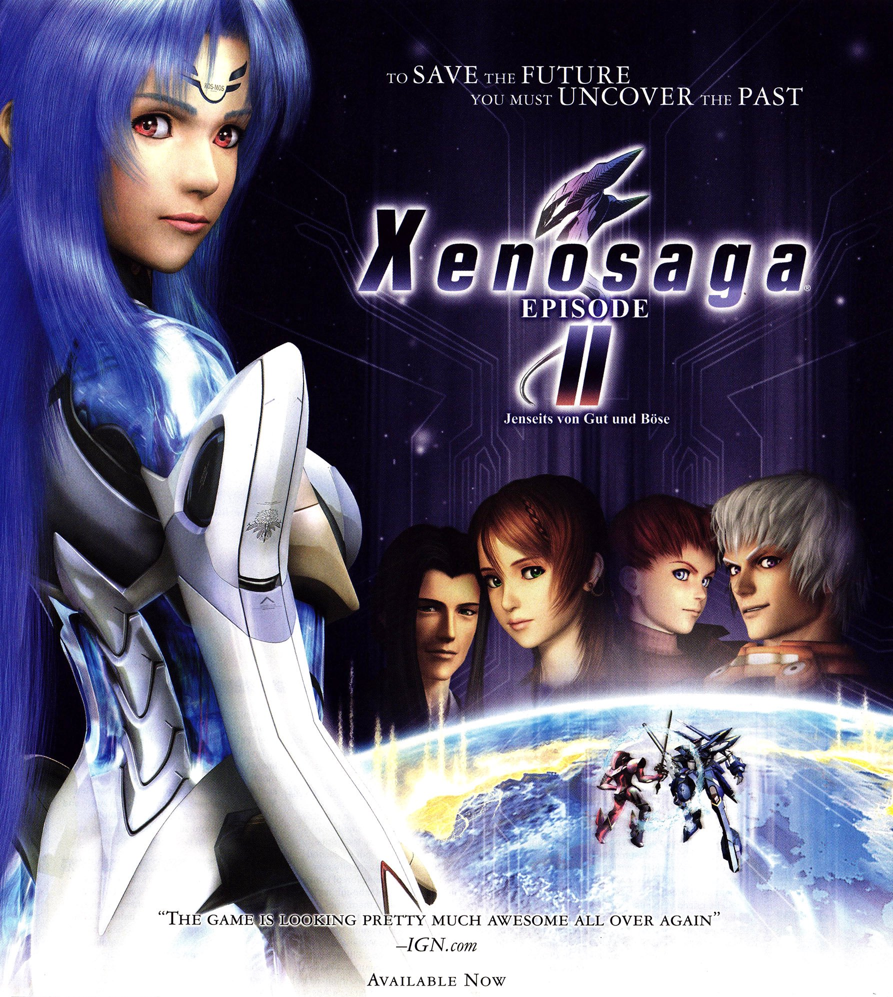
> THE REAL REASON FOR DIFFICULTY SPIKES IS TO PAD THE BOTTOM LINE.

The ego-building explanation is that Americans are that damn good. Tomonobu Itagaki, creator of Ninja Gaiden, often claims to make games with Western audiences in mind. Recently, Itagaki pandered directly to American pride, claiming, " [The best players come from] North America. The basis of this opinion comes from Americans' extremely active attitude towards videogames [and] the inherent competitiveness present in their national identity."

Everyone likes to be told how awesome they are, but the real reason for difficulty spikes is probably not to pad egos—it's to pad the bottom line.

American developers live in mortal fear their games will be deemed "just a rental." Developers strive to make their games "rental-proof" with more hours of gameplay than can be easily completed in a single rental. The best way to do this is to have tons of content; the less elegant way is to increase the difficulty and slow the player's progress. In Japan, however, game rentals are illegal. The used game market, on the other hand, is positively thriving, with buybacks as high as 80 percent of the sale price. The thriving used market encourages gamers to buy more, play faster, and resell quickly; the buyback price drops every week after release, and the more quickly a title can be completed and "turned over," the greater the player's satisfaction. Developers don't have to worry about the "buy or rent" dichotomy—they just worry about keeping players happy.

So more challenging American difficulty levels may just be a reflection of market realities. It's a good idea, in theory. But though developers try their best, they sometimes fix what isn't broken; tweaking too much, they alienate a portion of their audience. An American gamer replaying a level for the 23rd time, might, no doubt, wish the difficulty reflected gameplay realities, too. «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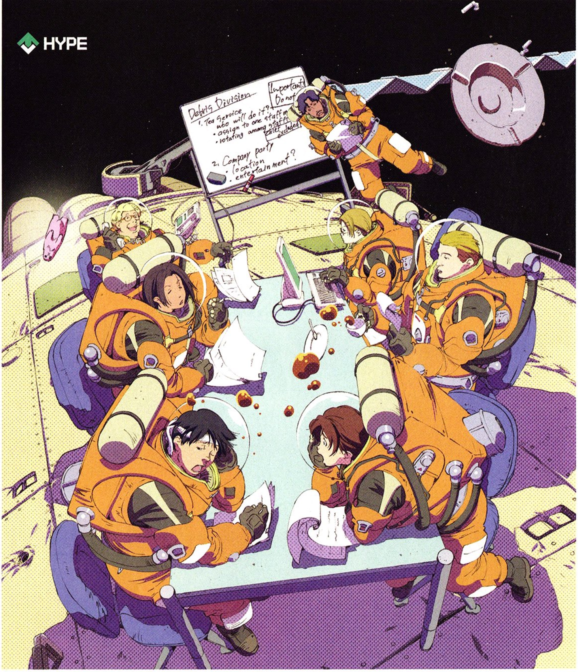

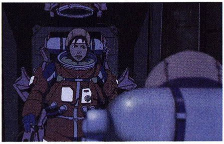

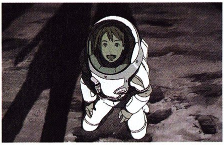

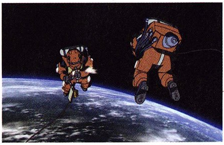

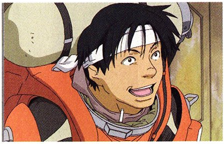

ANIMANIA

IN SPACE, NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU LITTER

HOSHI NO UMI NO GOMI

Planetes, one of Bandai's biggest releases this summer, is pretty "hard" science fiction as the genre goes. While it's a compelling character-driven drama and frequently very funny as well (watch for the colony of moon-dwelling ninja movie enthusiasts), it's also a serious, factually based look at 21st-century colonization in Earth's orbit and beyond. The heroes of the 26-episode TV series are a team of four garbage collectors, tasked with disposing of space junk that could cripple a fast-moving spacecraft.

Bandai's American division decided that a serious sci-fi story deserved some serious supplements for its U.S. release. The first volume will be priced at the usual $29.99, but it'll be a double-disc special edition featuring audio commentary from the Japanese director and voice cast, a bonus audio drama piece, interviews with the English actors and ADR director, and a specially produced documentary with some space-garbage experts: scientists from NASA's Orbital Space Debris Section.

An exact release date (likely in early summer) should be nailed down as you read this—sci-fi fans should pick it up whenever it arrives. In the meantime, Tokyopop's just finished releasing Makoto Yukimura's excellent five-volume *Planetes* comic series. Check that out for a different (but perhaps more powerful) take on some of the same plotlines and characters.

SHOJO BEATDOWN

Viz struck gold with its American version of Japan's popular *Shonen Jump*—the monthly manga magazine now boasts a circulation dwarfing anything produced by the home-grown U.S. comics industry—but its second anthology will be something very different. *Shojo Beat* will serve up a selection of comics aimed at a female audience (although nothing's stopping guys from enjoying them, too).

An eclectic lineup will kick off the series: Ai Yazawa's *Nana* (punk rock romantic drama in the Tokyo club scene), Taeko Watanabe's *Kaze Hikaru* (a girl masquerades as a Shinsengumi swordsman in Japan's 19th-century civil wars), Mitsuba Takanashi's *Crimson Hero* (high-school volleyball action drama), Yuu Watase's *Absolute Boyfriend* (a shy teenage girl and her new robotic beau), Kaori Yuki's *Godchild* (young aristocrat Cain meets intrigue in Victorian London), and Marimo Ragawa's *Baby & Me* (an 11-year-old boy raises his 2-year-old brother after the sudden passing of his mother).

Anybody who's been to a convention or club lately knows that anime and manga fandom is rapidly approaching an even gender balance, so this experiment just might be the next big hit. A free preview issue will arrive in April, and the first issue (priced at $5.99 for 250-plus pages, with promo subscriptions running at $29.95 a year) hits newsstands in July.

BEG, BORROW, BUT DEFINITELY STEAL

The best news from Geneon's latest release update: More *Lupin the 3rd* TV will arrive this July, following a brief hiatus after the release of a 10th volume on April 12 (just before another *Lupin* movie, *Island of Assassins,* hits on April 26). Some other recommended upcoming releases: AnimEigo's cheap four-volume *Bubblegum Crisis* rerelease (four discs coming monthly this spring), Harold Sakuishi's ace indie-rock manga *Beck* (due out from Tokyopop in July), and of course, the ongoing *Samurai Champloo*, the out-front contender for 2005's best series. « *Dave Smith*

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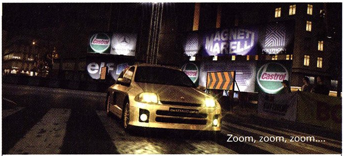
BY THE NUMBERS

IN ASSOCIATION WITH EB GAMES electronics boutique

SALES, RENTALS, TRENDS, AND ODDITIES—THE STATS THAT SHAPE YOUR VIDEOGAME WORLD


Zoom, zoom, zoom....

PS2 TOP 20 SALES

	Title (Publisher)	Score
1	Gran Turismo 4 (Sony CEA)	●●●●●
2	MVP Baseball 2005 (EA Sports)	●●●●◐
3	NBA Street V3 (EA Sports Big)	●●●●◐
4	Tekken 5 (Namco)	●●●●
5	Devil May Cry 3 (Capcom)	●●●●◐
6	Champions: Return to Arms (Sony Online)	●●●●◐
7	Xenosaga: Episode II (Namco)	●●●●
8	Fight Night Round 2 (EA Sports)	●●●●◐
9	Mercenaries (LucasArts)	●●●●◐
10	ESPN MLB 2K5 (ESPN Videogames)	●●●◐
11	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (Rockstar)	●●●●●
12	Shadow of Rome (Capcom)	●●●●
13	NBA Live 2005 (EA Sports)	●●●●
14	Madden NFL 2005 (EA Sports)	●●●●◐
15	Winning Eleven 8 International (Konami)	●●●●◐
16	Playboy: The Mansion (Arush Entertainment)	●●
17	Need for Speed Underground 2 (EA Games)	●●●●●
18	Punisher (THQ)	●●●◐
19	NASCAR 2005: Chase for the Cup (EA Sports)	●●●●●
20	World Championship Poker (Crave)	●◐

1UP'S 10 MOST WANTED PS2 GAMES

1	GTA: San Andreas	Rockstar
2	FF VII: Advent Children	Square Enix
3	Gran Turismo 4	Sony CEA
4	SOCOM 3	Sony CEA
5	Devil May Cry 3	Capcom
6	NFS Underground 2	EA Games
7	NBA Street V3	EA Sports Big
8	Tekken 5	Namco
9	Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	Konami
10	Final Fantasy XII	Square Enix

JAPAN'S TOP 10 PS2 GAMES

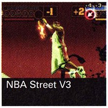
1	Dynasty Warriors 5	Koei
2	Dragonball Z Budokai 3	Bandai
3	Devil May Cry 3	Capcom
4	Rumble Roses	Konami
5	Radiata Stories	Square Enix
6	Another Century's Episode	Banpresto
7	Jissen Pachislot Fist of N. Star	Sega
8	Gran Turismo 4	Sony CEI
9	Sakura Taisen 3	Sega
10	D1 Grand Prix	Yukes

TOP 10 RENTALS, ALL SYSTEMS

1	Gran Turismo 4 (PS2)	Sony CEA
2	NBA Street V3 (PS2)	EA Sports Big
3	GTA: San Andreas (PS2)	Rockstar
4	Mercenaries (PS2)	LucasArts
5	Punisher (PS2)	THQ
6	Mercenaries (XB)	LucasArts
7	NFL Street 2 (PS2)	EA Sports Big
8	Project: Snowblind (XB)	Eidos
9	NFS Underground 2 (PS2)	EA
10	Project: Snowblind (PS2)	Eidos

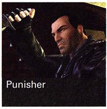
TOP 10 SALES, ALL SYSTEMS

1	Gran Turismo 4 (PC)	Sony CEA
2	MVP Baseball 2005 (PS2)	EA Sports
3	NBA Street V3 (PS2)	EA Sports Big
4	World of WarCraft (PC)	Vivendi Universal
5	MVP Baseball 2005 (XB)	EA Sports
6	Champions: RTA (PS2)	Sony Online
7	Xenosaga: Episode II (PS2)	Namco
8	NBA Street V3 (XB)	EA Sports Big
9	Tekken 5 (PS2)	Namco
10	WarioWare (DS)	Nintendo


NBA Street V3

Champions: Return to Arms

Shadow of Rome

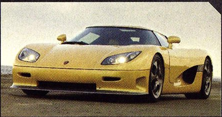

Punisher

Source: EB Games, February 2005. Numbers reflect the sales at EB and its affiliated outlets and don't include other retail outlets. That's probably why you'll never see *Deer Hunter* crack the top 10. Japan's top 10 and the top 10 rentals come from other sources. Game descriptions written by the *OPM* staff. Crash and Burn sources: Guinness World Records, Dana's head.

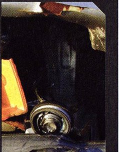
TREND SPOTTER

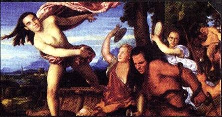
VIVISECTION
It's the new drive-by. We've seen so many bisections in the past few months that it's brought back memories of high school biology lab. Kratos, Dante, the Prince, Musashi—they've been slicing and dicing enough to impress the chefs at Benihana. And people say videogames are too violent....

CRASH AND BURN



806
Horsepower of the Swedish Koenigsegg CCR, the world's fastest car (top speed: 245+ mph).





03
Straight weeks that the Crash Test Dummies' single "Mmm Mmm Mmm Mmm" was No. 1.

6.3
The number (in millions) of both fatal and nonfatal car crashes in the United States in 2003.

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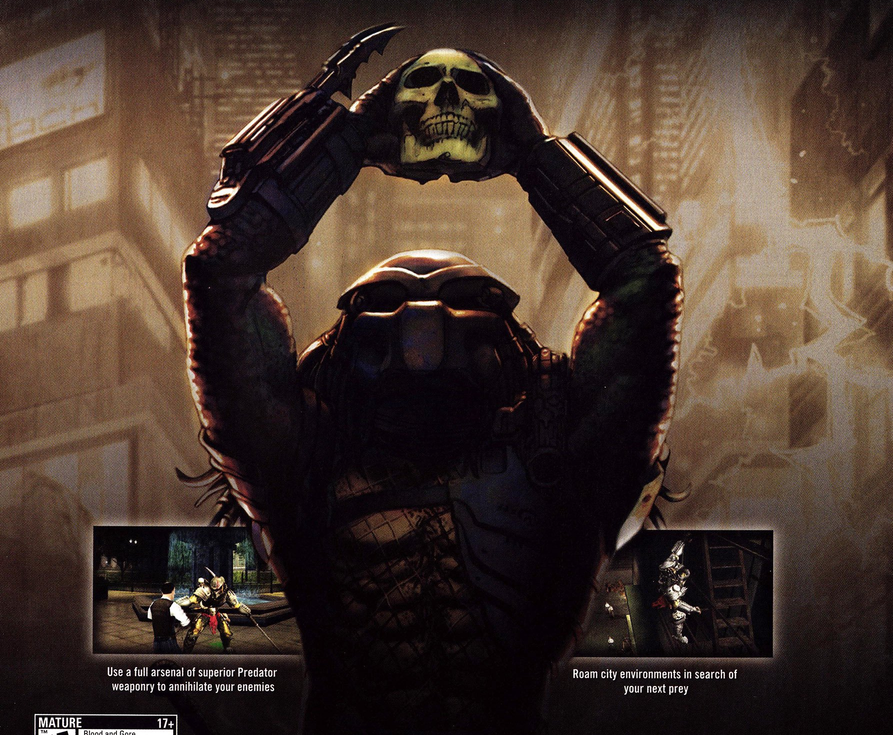

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CRASH AND BURN

CRITERION'S BRINGING YOU A NEW HUNK OF BURNOUT LOVE

by Dana Jongewaard

News of the existence of *Burnout 4,* coming so soon on the heels of its predecessor, was met with more than a little skepticism in the *OPM* offices. "What can they do that matters?" we wondered. "How can the team improve on what was a near perfect blend of racing and crashing?"

That was where our thinking got off track. Because the Criterion team isn't looking to improve upon the *Burnout* formula—it's looking to reinvent it.

BURNOUT

THE NEXT GENERATION

Our first 20 minutes in the Criterion offices, located in Guildford, England, have nothing to do with racing. "I've picked the winner of *American Idol* already," announces Alex Ward, creative director of Criterion. "I've picked the winner out of the top 24. I need to call Vegas and see if it's possible for me to place a bet."

What seems at first like a random tangent starts leading into the game. He continues, "You know, [England] invented that show; here it's called *Pop Idol*. And the difference between *American Idol* and *Pop Idol* is that *American Idol* is about the American dream. In England they say, 'Oh, here you go; you're through to the next round,' and no one really cares. In America, they do a story before you get in the audition room, and you want them to succeed. And they say, 'Here you go America; here's your final 24, and you decide.' In England, we don't care, but America's in on it. I swear that I sat down last Saturday night taking notes on *American Idol* for *Burnout*. Because America has to be a part of this."

America was definitely a part of *Burnout 3*'s huge success. The game won numerous accolades from both the enthusiast and mainstream press, including *OPM*'s game of the year award for 2004. So is *Burnout 4* just a way to capitalize on a hot franchise?

"No," says Ward. "We were always going to bring this game out this year," he promises. "Right now, we're not doing anything next generation. Criterion's always been based on PlayStation 2. We specialize in that hardware, and we're out to get as much out of the system as we can, and there's still a lot more we can do. After *Burnout 3* people said, 'You couldn't possibly do any more,' but it was always our plan."

The team is completely aware of the pressure on the follow-up to such a popular game. Matt Webster, executive producer for the game, says, "We came off the back of such huge success with *Burnout 3*, and that was the biggest challenge for us. We looked at each other and said, 'OK, now what?' So we had a look at what *Burnout*'s goal was. We are not changing things for change's sake. Everything we're doing is part of a progression, of moving the series forward."

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

One of the first obvious changes that's noticeable in *Burnout 4* is the look of the game. Previous iterations have always felt more like arcade racers: Skies are clear, views are scenic, buildings are picturesque. They've been about as close to reality as Epcot Center is.

The feel of *Burnout 4* is much more realistic. "What we're doing with lighting, what we're doing with palette is much different than what we've done before," says Webster. "Previous versions have been very light and colorful, almost Sega style; this time we're going for a slightly more…I hate to say gritty, I hate to say edgy, but I'm trying to think of what else I could say."

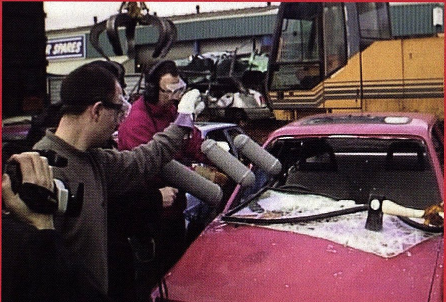
> "WE ARE NOT CHANGING THINGS FOR CHANGE'S SAKE."

"If the last game was *Return of the Jedi*, this one is *The Empire Strikes Back*," adds Ward.

While previous versions of the game have taken place in locations that are modeled after real places, the names of those locations have been made up. Remember dodging the columns of an overpass as you raced through the urban setting known simply as Downtown on some of the American tracks? That portion of the game was modeled after the Loop in downtown Chicago.

TICKETS TO RIDE

Alex Ward once got out of a speeding ticket when the officer found out that he worked on the *Burnout* series. The officer let him off with two warnings: one not to speed again and the other to tone down the crashes in the series, because he thought they were over the top.

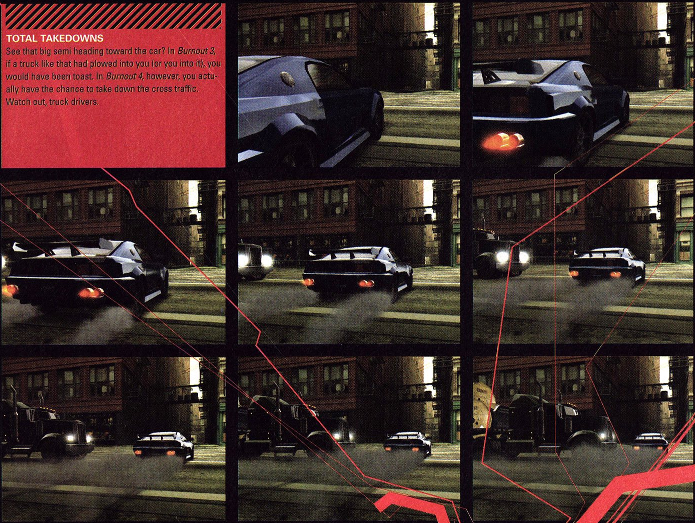


GET ON THE MIC

When you're racing to a crash junction while playing *Burnout*, your whole body tenses in anticipation of that delicious crunch of metal and splintering of glass. So how exactly do those sounds get made for the game?

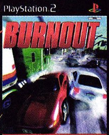
In the case of *Burnout*, it requires a lot of heavy instruments, a crane, a bunch of old cars, and some good recording equipment. Beating sledgehammers into windshields, taking axes to hoods, crunching cars in the giant claws of a crane, dropping vehicles on top of one another—it's a hard day's work. The team also uses nontraditional methods to get some of those sounds. For example, they ordered a bunch of dry ice so they could record the sounds of it being dropped on sheets of metal. Another day saw them slashing at each other with swords.

For *Burnout 4*, the team is experimenting with incorporating nontraditional sounds into the crash symphony, taking cues from car smashups in movies and television. One idea they're toying with is including animal sounds in the cacophony to heighten the tension; a screech from a leopard might be mixed into the shriek of metal as cars scrape against each other. Another possibility is using sound to warn players of an incoming crash, taking a cue from the horror-movie tradition of prefacing an attack with foreboding music.



TOTAL TAKEDOWNS

See that big semi heading toward the car? In *Burnout 3*, if a truck like that had plowed into you (or you into it), you would have been toast. In *Burnout 4*, however, you actually have the chance to take down the cross traffic. Watch out, truck drivers.



SHINY RED CAR

Before the first *Burnout* had been given its name, the team at Criterion was calling the game *SRC*, after the shiny red car that was the cover image.

This time around, the team is finally naming the game's locations after their real-life counterparts. For each location, the team takes voluminous amounts of photographs around the corresponding real-life area. "We look at a location, and we think: Is it perfect for *Burnout*? Is the vibe there?" says Ward. While the team may draw upon actual structures within the individual cities, it doesn't do re-creations of a city's layout. And that's in part because no city in the world is built destructively enough for the *Burnout* team—it can always make a city more dangerous.

Eight different locations across North America, Europe, and Asia will be home to the tracks of *Burnout 4*. We were shown the Detroit location while at Criterion's studios (we also learned about Rome, Hong Kong, and Tokyo). "Detroit is grimy, it's aggressive—it's perfect for *Burnout*," beams Ward. The skies were overcast in the scenes we saw. Decrepit warehouses lined the streets, graffiti scrawled across their walls; steam billowed from sewer grates; boxes and crates littered the alleyways; towering overpasses cast shadows across the streets.

RUN THE RACE

The look of the game isn't the only thing that is different. "We want more explosives, we want more ways to fight, we want more deformation," says Ward. One of the inspirations for the team as it was going into production was a series of awesome crashes that members had collected from a variety of sources and strung into a two-minute sequence. There's footage from *Bad Boys II* and film from *Smallville*, and, of course, the crashes from *Episode I*'s pod-racing scene make an appearance as well.

The montage really provides a vivid illustration of the team's goal. Sparks shower into the air, pieces of vehicles fly off to the right and left and every which way, and the shrieks of metal against asphalt make fingernails on a blackboard sound soothing. After the sequence finishes, some members of the team are smiling almost beatifically. This is what they want for their game.

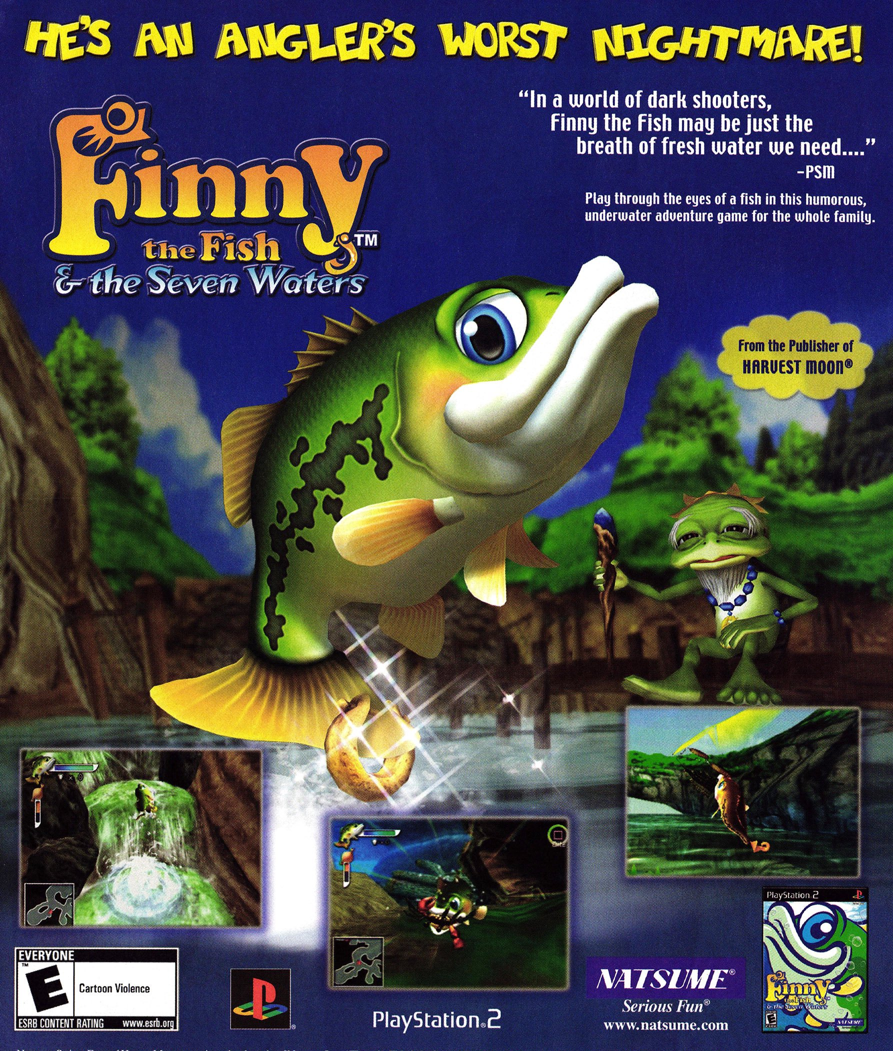
So how do you get more crashes? One of the primary changes is to course design. Road rage mode was added late in the cycle of *Burnout 3*, and by the time it was included, all of the tracks had already been designed. The problem with that was that the courses were designed as more traditional race courses. Wide-open roads with few obstacles aren't as conducive to taking out your opponents as pillars are.

This time the team has designed the courses with an eye for takedowns. "We've built the tracks for aggressive driving; we're making the tracks root for the game experience," says Ward. Remember the Downtown tracks in *Burnout 3*? Plan on course designs that are like that rather than the open scenic routes.

> "WE'VE BUILT THE TRACKS FOR AGGRESSIVE DRIVING."

"If you look at the Vineyard track, there was nowhere to take anyone down," complains Webster. "It was a beautiful racing circuit, and that was the issue. But a couple of those tracks in Downtown…I used to come out of the alleyway and take that right under the El and be scared—I knew I was going to be fighting."

"We have a saying: tricked out for takedowns," Ward continues. One way the developers trick out a track is by inserting choke points, which means the track will suddenly narrow so racers have to battle each other to make it through and continue on. You'll have more obstacles to avoid in the road, such as viaduct support pillars, light poles, sign posts. There



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are even shortcuts you can take to get out ahead of your opponents.

One of the coolest changes made to racing tracks is the addition of ramps, which let you leap past your competitors or help you execute a new type of takedown: the vertical takedown. In fact, the whole setup of the tracks has added the third dimension of height, thanks to the use of overpasses, ramps, and jumps. The courses have a lot more layers to explore and exploit this time.

RUSH HOUR

The other obvious way to increase the number of crashes is to increase the number of cars on the road. "Lots of racing games that are big right now have you racing at night," says Webster, "and that's when the traffic's down. In *Burnout*, we have you racing through traffic, because the traffic adds tension. We talked to ourselves and asked, 'What's the ultimate challenge?' And the ultimate challenge to us was, do what you do in *Burnout 3*, but through rush hour traffic."

For starters, you'll be competing against more rivals. The team is still working on balancing issues, so a magic number of opponents hasn't been established, but one method they may opt for is to have you gradually work your way up to competing against more cars. In one of the preliminary menus that popped up, "Number of Rivals" was the third option you were able to choose, right after "Continent" and "Track."

"You're fighting more rivals; you're fighting the circuits now," says Webster. "And now you also get to fight against the traffic. It's the key thing that kind of underpins everything." For those of you who dreaded crowded intersections in *Burnout 3*, take heart: This time you can also take down traffic around you. The specifics of how this is going to work are being hashed out right now, but traffic is the key to the new *Burnout*. Now it will be possible to hit other cars without having to crash yourself.

Another way they're adding more crashes into the game is by importing the much-beloved crashbreaker from crash mode into racing. "One of the cool things about *Burnout 3* is that you could use aftertouch to take someone out as you were wrecking," says Ward. "But it could be difficult to master. A cool thing we've added to *Burnout 4* is that when you crash when you're racing, if you get taken down, you can fire a crashbreaker in the race."

"This time," adds Webster, "you can play the crash."

Ward smiles mischievously. "We're going to do everything *Gran Turismo*'s never going to do. We wanted to ruin it, deliberately, for every other team in the world making a racing game, so that when you hit the cars and nothing happens, you're disappointed."

CAR TUNES

Members of the team have lobbied unsuccessfully to have "Everybody Hurts" by R.E.M. or "Accidents Will Happen" by Elvis Costello as theme songs for various games in the series.

> "WE WANTED TO RUIN IT FOR EVERY OTHER TEAM IN THE WORLD."

CRASH COURSE

It seems only fitting that Chris Roberts, the lead crash designer on *Burnout 4*, has a slightly awkward time demoing the new and improved crash mode—he has a sling on his left arm, courtesy of a soccer accident that left him with a broken elbow. "Crash mode was always something we started after we got the races done," Roberts tells us. "On *Burnout 3*, we used to come in on Sundays—crash mode Sunday, we called it—and play through all 100 to come up with the names."

Crash mode is no longer the bastard child, however—the whole mode

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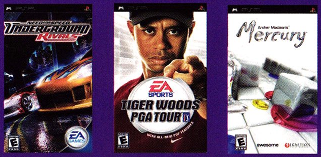

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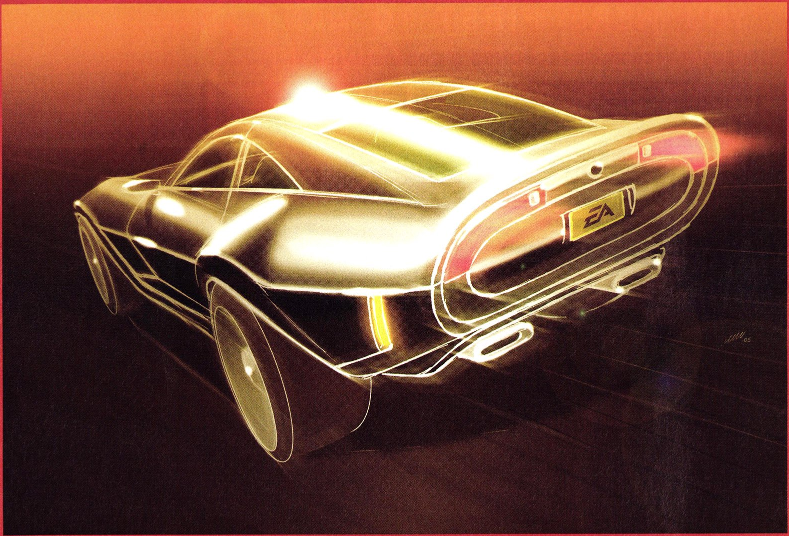

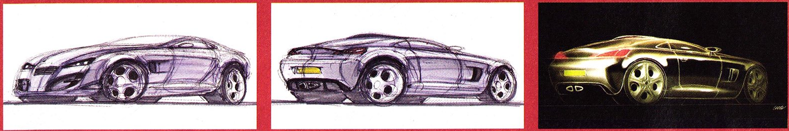

The *Burnout* team has never used licensed vehicles, for the very simple reason that no car manufacturer wants to have a readily accessible demonstration of how easy it is to turn its vehicles into scrap metal.

How do they come up with a racing fleet if they can't use real cars? In the past, the team has taken designs of existing cars and then changed them enough so they're legally considered different. But that left a lot to be desired as far as the team was concerned. "We don't want our cars to feel like 'cut-jobs,' where people basically take two cars and put them together," says Webster. "We want our cars to feel like *Burnout* cars. We want it to be our property."

So this time, they're trying a different approach. Criterion has hired two real-life car designers, Lee Walton and Dan Walker. Walton has worked on designs for European automotive company Peugeot and has been designing virtual cars for videogames since 2000. Walker has consulted for Jaguar, Ford, and Nissan, among others. He's also done some design work for movie studios—recent films he has worked on include *Doom* (he designed the BFG) and *Batman Begins* (he did the interior of the Batmobile).

Together, the two men are creating an entire stable of cars from the ground up, and the vehicles will come in three flavors: Racers are cars that are best suited for more traditional races, muscle cars are designed for road rage events, and crash cars are, obviously, made for crash events.

While *Burnout* will never be about tuning, the team is discussing ways to give players a bigger sense of attachment to their cars. Specific cars are being designed for specific locations, but whether or not you'll be able to access any car in any location in any mode is still being worked out by the team.

Also being changed is how the cars actually crash. Senior Tech Lead Hamish Young says, "Looking back at the tech for *Burnout 3*, there was an awful lot that we weren't getting out of it. We looked at that again and really tried to push the effects we were getting out of the crashes."

How will they do that? For starters, they're doubling the number of bones (the structural pieces underneath a car's skin) in each vehicle. This allows for a much more complex crumpling system as cars sustain damage over the course of a race. They also plan to make vehicles "heavier" than they are in *Burnout 3*. Finally, each car will have a lot more individual parts that can fly off, and they'll break off gradually rather than all in one go.

THE ONLINE EXPERIENCE

"[*Burnout 3*] is the fastest racing game online; it's the most exciting racing game online. But to be hard on our own game, we didn't do enough unique things for online. We put specific crash modes online, but there were no online rewards. This time what we want to do is increase online rewards; that's one thing we're working on at the moment."

—Alex Ward

is getting rebuilt from the ground up. In the past, crash junctions were set up at racecourse intersections. This time, each location has its own unique crash course, and the total number of junctions on those eight crash courses will equal, if not surpass, the 100 crash junctions in *Burnout 3*.

Crash mode's courses have been designed specifically for multilevel, multiexplosion goodness. As in the racing modes, one of the major new features is the courses' vertical nature. One of the sites we saw, set in Detroit, started on the roof of a building. Players can launch off a ramp on the roof and land on a freeway teeming with cars. From there, they can use the crashbreaker to propel themselves off the edge of the freeway and into the middle of a parking lot situated below the overpass.

A second junction that was shown is set in a mountainous region. After the initial crash, the player can crashbreak down to a switchback below and then crashbreak again down into a ravine.

Other changes to the mode include multiple start points. Barrels and boxes—known to the team as props—are scattered throughout the junctions, and hitting props on your way to the crash can increase your score. Even better is that some props may explode when you hit them. Multiplier icons are going away, although the team hasn't dismissed the possibility of hiding pickups throughout the junctions. Crashbreaker icons will still be present on the courses, but this time the amount of power that your crashbreaker generates is tied to the amount of boost you have. There is also the possibility of different types of crashbreakers, though details on how those would work are still being hashed out.

Two problems in *Burnout 3's* crash mode were the repeated load times and the lack of camera control while trying to steer your car during a crashbreaker. Both of these issues are being addressed in *Burnout 4*. Once a crash junction has loaded, you'll be able to restart and replay it without having to endure all those additional load times. And now when you trigger a crashbreaker, you'll be in charge of the camera, so you can see exactly where you are and where you want to go.

The changes all combine to offer the player the opportunity to do a lot more experimentation and employ a lot more strategy. "Crash mode has got to be big enough to be its own game," concludes Ward. "This is the crash mode we've been wanting to do since *Burnout 2*."

WHAT NEXT?

So what's next for the *Burnout* franchise? The team is not satisfied with where this step will take them—they're looking beyond that. They're looking to those film segments they've collected. Says Webster, "That *Bad Boys II* sequence is such an inspiration to us—it's got the crashes, it's got the crash escapes, it's got fast-moving traffic, it's got action. And I think that's what, looking forward three or four years, we want to get to."

"THIS IS THE CRASH MODE WE'VE WANTED TO DO SINCE *BURNOUT 2*."

Ward picks up the thread: "We want the movies to steal from us. Think of the best car chase you've ever seen, and that's where we want to go. This is our fourth game, and we're just getting started.

"We want a game that everyone can enjoy. And we're going forward with that; we're not going away. America's just starting to get turned on to this, and we're going to continue that trend. And that's why we watch American shows. There are things in this new game that we've learned from American TV shows."

He pauses for a second; then he adds, "We *will* be *American Idol*." «

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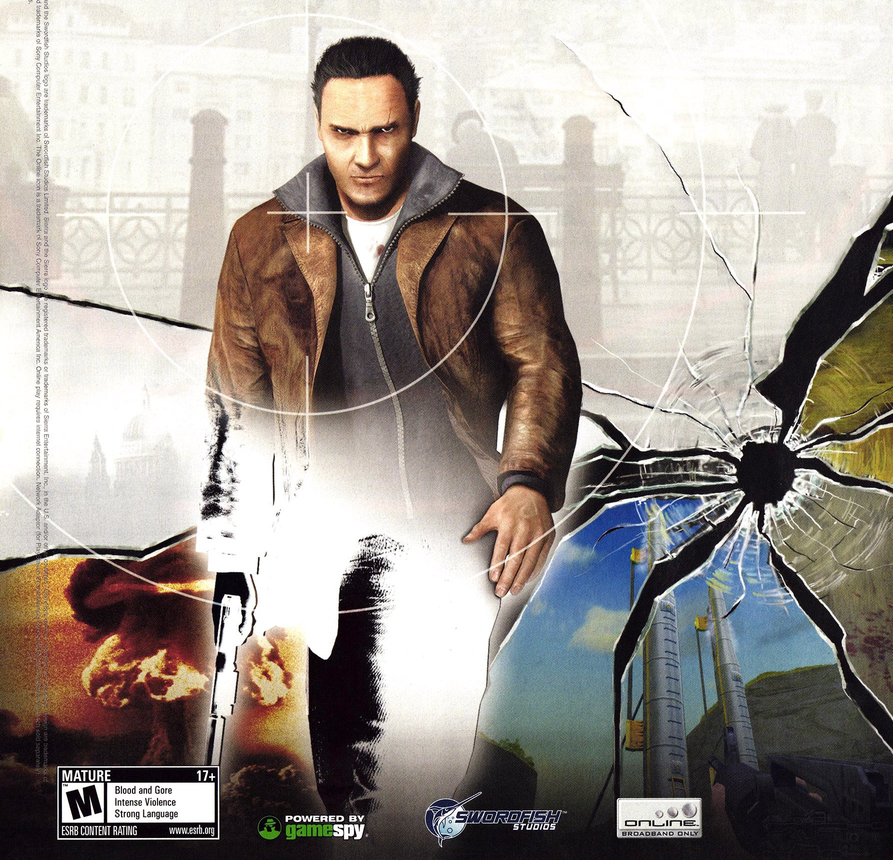

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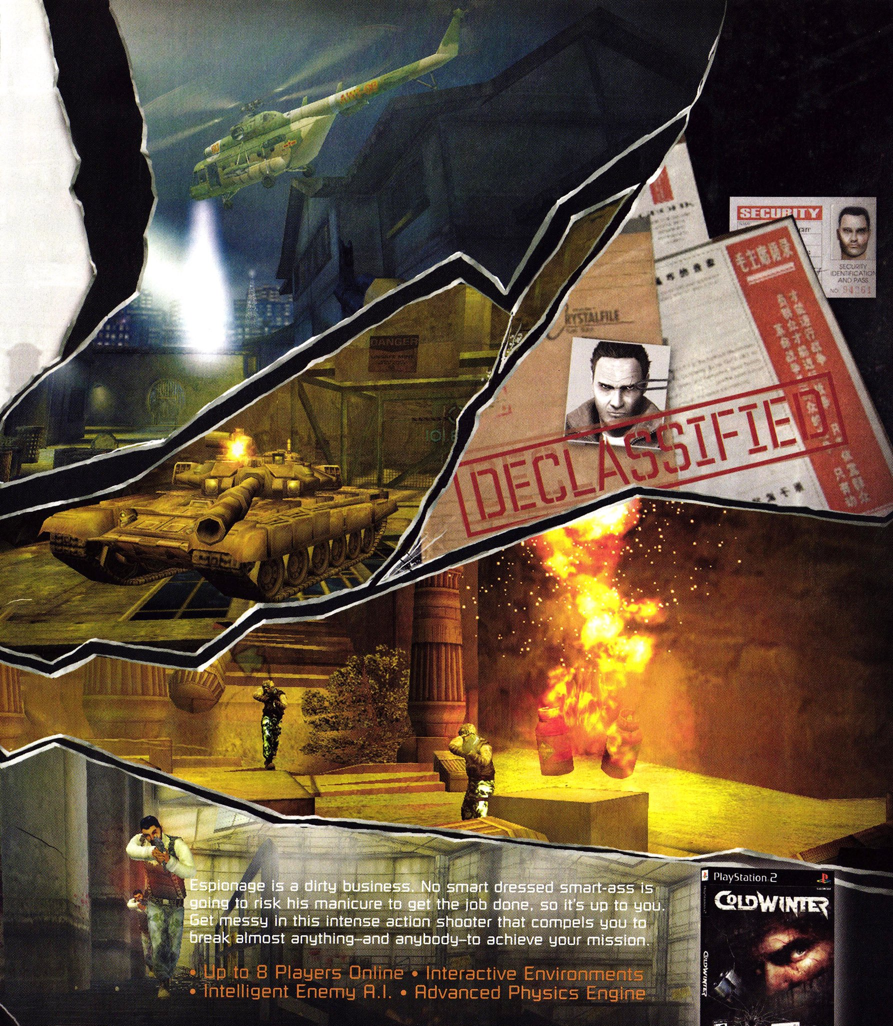
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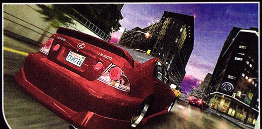

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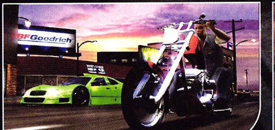

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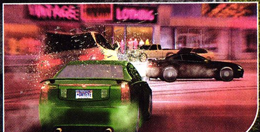

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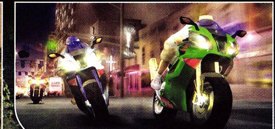

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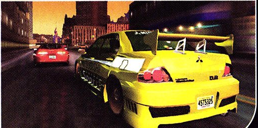

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REVIEWS

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OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

GOD OF WAR

NOT REVOLUTIONARY, JUST AWESOME

GAME OF THE MONTH

RATING KEY

Octagons. Stomps. Ocs. Blargs. Call our rating symbols what you will—just know that any game that receives five of 'em is something truly special that deserves a spot in your collection. On the other hand, a 2.5 is merely mediocre. And a 0.5? Well...at least they're fun to rip apart.

⬢⬢⬢⬢⬢

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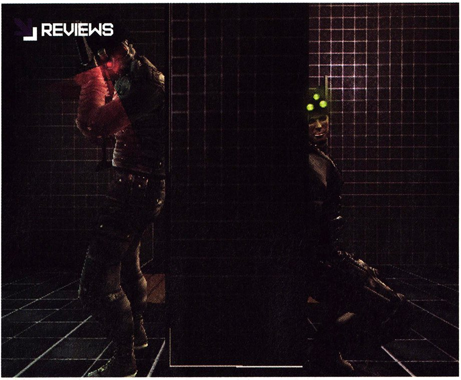
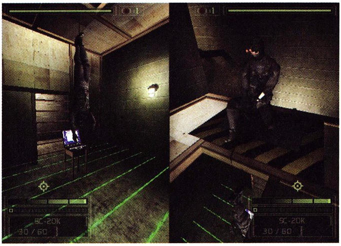
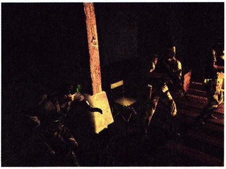
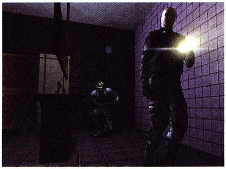
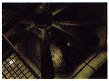










INSULT TO INJURY

A CRIME AGAINST CO-OP

As if the all-too-familiar versus mode weren't enough of a slight against PS2 owners, the game's huge cooperative campaign is offered only in splitscreen on PS2—online co-op is not an option, as it is in the Xbox and PC versions. That, in a word, sucks. However, don't let sour grapes prevent you from checking out this supercool extra. Essentially a campaign in its own right (though admittedly briefer than the single-player game), co-op gives you and a friend a bunch of incredibly cool two-man moves to play around with. How cool? You can toss your teammate over walls. You can lower him upside-down on a rope to access a laser-grid-guarded computer, *Mission: Impossible* style. You can throw him over gaps or at enemies. You can boost him up to an out-of-reach ledge and then climb him like a rope to get there yourself. Get the idea? You'll put all these moves (and more!) to use in levels that are based in the same general areas as Sam's missions, but with completely different objectives. With this extensive mode, versus multiplayer, and the single-player campaign, *Chaos Theory* is basically three games in one.

SPLINTER CELL

I WANT TO BE SAM FISHER WHEN I GROW UP

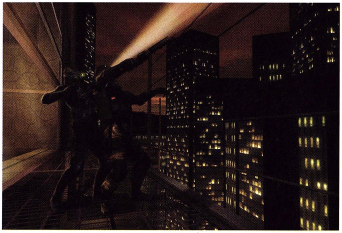
I want to get this out of the way first thing: *Chaos Theory* is one of the best-looking games I've ever seen on the PS2. The designers must have employed some kind of crazy voodoo to make the system do things that by all rights it really shouldn't be able to do. They basically figured out some way to imitate the Xbox's much-vaunted "normal-mapping" technology, which makes flat textures appear to have real depth, so levels look infinitely more detailed than ever before. It's quite a feat.

I wanted to get that out of the way early because *Splinter Cell* is so very *not* about graphics. Oh sure, it's nice to have everything look all purty, but much like Sam Fisher himself, this game ain't about looks. It's about stealth—hardcore stealth.

How hardcore? Well, remember how in the previous *Splinter Cell*s you have a meter showing how visible you are? Now you've got another meter showing how loud you're being in comparison to the ambient noise. Now you can't just stay in the shadows; you've also got to pay attention to the kind of surface you're walking on. You can move quickly on soft, quiet carpet—but you'll need to creep along at a snail's pace on gravel. A blown-out lightbulb, a clumsy drop from a ledge, even your silenced weapons can give you away. Hardcore? Yeah, I got your hardcore right here.

But the surprising thing about *Chaos Theory* is that it all works so well. You'd think that adding more ways to get noticed would make the game more frustrating, but the levels are so carefully and cleverly designed that you'll never feel as though the challenge of going unnoticed is insurmountable. (Well, maybe not *never*—the final level is a pretty serious bitch.) It certainly helps that *Chaos Theory* does away with the three-alarms-and-you're-done structure of the previous game. Instead, the enemies equip more defenses as the alarms pile up, so you definitely *want* to avoid setting off an alarm, but you don't strictly *have* to. And the game supplants sensibly spaced checkpoints with a save-anywhere system to help you through the really tough spots, so even at its most difficult the experience rarely feels frustrating.

Because the levels are set up to allow you to be a supreme stealth badass, it doesn't take long to start *feeling* like a supreme stealth badass.



THE SHORT END OF THE STICK

VERSUS MODE LOOKS AWFULLY FAMILIAR

The versus multiplayer mode in *Chaos Theory* is every bit as deep, challenging, and unusual as the one in *Pandora Tomorrow*. That's because it's exactly the same. Unlike the Xbox or PC games, in which versus mode was completely revamped to balance out the differences between spies and mercenaries (most notably adding the ability for mercs to restrain and verbally taunt spies, as well as adding new gadgets and weapons), the PS2 version simply adds four new levels. Everything else is identical—including the graphics engine. That means you'll notice a pretty significant difference between the gorgeous "geo-textured" single-player graphics and the multiplayer graphics carried over from last year's model.

That's the bad news. The good news is that, as hard as it may be to get into—and you *will* need to practice if you hope to survive online—this is still one of the greatest multiplayer setups in existence. Nothing beats standing motionless in the shadows as another human-controlled character walks by you, completely unaware of your presence, and the way the game forces cooperation and constant communication is simply brilliant. The four new levels don't justify picking up the game if you already have *Pandora Tomorrow* and all you care about is versus mode, but unless both of the above are true, it's still an engrossing, thrilling—and seriously value-adding—experience.

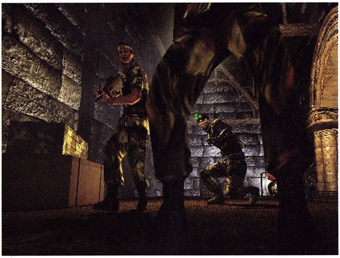
CHAOS THEORY

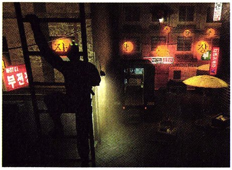
There's nothing quite like zapping a light with your OCP and then creeping up behind some nameless guerrilla as he wanders over to investigate. Or waiting patiently in a Japanese bath for a guard to walk by, then exploding out of the water and dragging him in (a kill that's exclusive to the PS2 version, incidentally). There's a definite feeling of power.

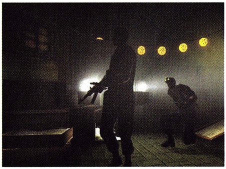
This feeling is only enhanced by Michael Ironside's fantastic voice work. Say what you will about his acting (personally, I thought he was totally awesome in *V: The Final Battle*), the man can deliver a one-liner like nobody's business. At one point he asks Lambert, "Apart from preventing World War III, what else can I do for you this evening?" That pretty much sums it up. Of course, it helps that the writing throughout the game is truly exceptional. From overheard enemy conversations to the intimate chats Sam has with a bad guy in a headlock, the exchanges are sometimes amusing, almost always significant, and never boring. Sometimes—especially when Sam grabs a guy who doesn't really have any story-advancing information—the dialogue is laugh-out-loud funny. One memorable moment has Sam trying in vain to get a word in edgewise as a terrified guerrilla loudly proclaims his love for America. "Born to be wild! Born to be free! Apple pie! Go Yankees!" Hysterical.

The excellence in writing extends to the plot as a whole, too. Of course, it is undeniably complex in a typically Clancy way, but it seemed to me to be easier to follow than the stories of the last couple outings. Perhaps I'm just attuned to the convoluted plot structure by this point, but I never felt like I lost the primary plot threads, in spite of the revolving door of characters, the shifting allegiances, and the aborted mission objectives. Apart from a somewhat anticlimactic ending, the globe-spanning story was pretty satisfying, and it offered plenty of opportunities to cement Sam's reputation as a veritable *übermensch* of espionage.

If I have one major complaint about the game, though, it's that there don't seem to be enough opportunities for Sam to bust out his truly top-shelf moves. Hanging from a bar by your legs, reaching down, and snapping an enemy's neck sure looks cool in the tutorial. Too bad I had to basically manufacture that scenario in the game itself by climbing up onto a bar and then whistling to draw a guard over. It seems as though the







THE FIFTH FREEDOM

THE MORALITY OF SAM FISHER

Would it surprise you to learn that *Chaos Theory* actually discourages killing? It's true. And I'm not just talking about the missions in which you're instructed not to inflict any civilian casualties. No, it goes deeper than that: There are very few points in the game where a nonlethal response is not in some way more beneficial than an itchy trigger finger. Consider the following scenario: Sam has a bad guy in a headlock. He has two primary options: knock him out or kill him (with the killing taking a variety of forms depending on the immediate surroundings; you can push enemies off balconies, for example). The standard kill move is a vicious knee to the back, which presumably breaks the target's spine. But it also causes the bad guy to make quite a bit of noise as he falls over, potentially alerting anyone in the vicinity.

On the other hand, if Sam just chokes the enemy into unconsciousness, the victim is utterly silent. Furthermore, holding down the Choke button makes Sam sling the body over his shoulder immediately, making it easier to stash quickly. On top of all this, you'll almost always find out important information by grabbing a guy and interrogating him rather than taking him out from a distance. And finally, when examining your rating at the end of the level, you may notice that you're rated lower when you've taken a lot of guards out permanently—rather than just temporarily. You'll even occasionally find that less-lethal behavior nets you a bonus objective or two.

Now, I don't want to give the impression that *Chaos Theory* is some sort of antiviolence manifesto. There are several points in the game where you will be required to kill someone as a primary mission objective; it's just part of being superspy Sam Fisher. But these moments are extremely few in comparison to the times when actually keeping someone alive is more beneficial. The result is subtle, but undeniable: Sam does a better job when his targets stay healthy.

series has strayed away from Sam's crazy acrobatics toward a slightly more realistic setup; to me, that's a bit of a disappointment.

And speaking of disappointment, PS2 owners got a pretty ungentle shaft in the multiplayer department. Check out the sidebars for the specifics, but suffice it to say that if the fundamental multiplayer setup wasn't so undeniably awesome, the comparison between the PS2 version and the PC and Xbox releases would seriously hurt the score here.

The bottom line is, if the whole techie-spy-saves-the-world shtick is your thing, I can't think of a reason you wouldn't love the hell out of this game. But remember what I said: This is a very hardcore stealth game. You can get through some levels by running and gunning, but you're going to miss out on just about everything that makes *Chaos Theory* so great. That makes it sort of a specialized kind of game; patience, careful planning, and a certain tolerance for trial and error are far more important than quick reflexes and an itchy trigger finger, which means it's not really for everyone. But if you're willing to put forth the effort, you're in for a supremely satisfying time. « *Joe Rybicki*

PROS Interesting story, excellent writing, and a stupendous badass for a main character

CONS May be too complex and/or slow paced for shooter fans; PS2 owners totally got shafted with multiplayer

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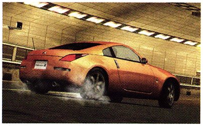

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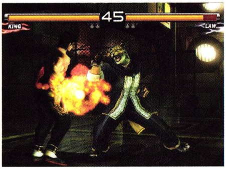
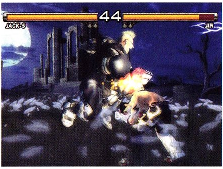
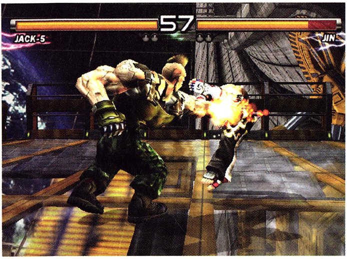
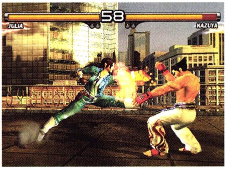
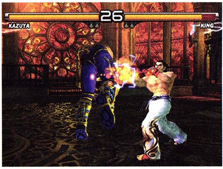
TEKKEN IT BACK TO ITS ROOTS

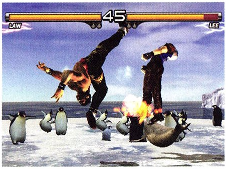


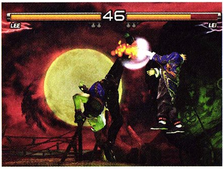


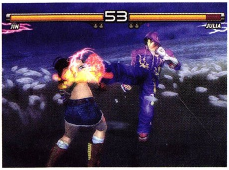












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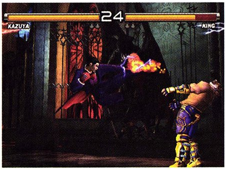


The best way to describe playing *Tekken 5* is that it's like being reintroduced to a longtime friend you had lost contact with for a while. For *Tekken*, that quiet period was *Tekken Tag Tournament* and *Tekken 4*. These games aren't terrible, but they generally fail to capture the spirit of the series due to their respective gimmicks—the tag-team action and enclosed arenas aren't as polished as they could've been.

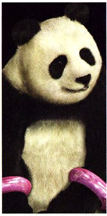
Namco had to do something to draw the interest of fans that may have been turned off by *Tekken* during those years, and it has largely succeeded with *Tekken 5*. In fact, looking at the features included in this game is almost like reading a letter from Namco to its fans that says, "Hey, I'm sorry. Come back and play *Tekken* again." The first three *Tekken* arcade games are included, having been ported perfectly to the PS2. The new ranking mode, while highly derivative of the one found in *Virtua Fighter 4*, does an excellent job of extending what would normally be an ordinary single-player mode. Plus, it lets you earn points that you can spend on different costume items for each character in the game, adding a little extra incentive to keep honing your skills alone when there isn't any competition readily available. Unfortunately, the Tekken: Devil Within action minigame isn't anything astounding and can get boring rather quickly, but it's still much more fun to play than Namco's attempts to include such a feature in previous *Tekken* games.

Really, the only thing absent from the package is the excellent Tekken Bowl mode, but you won't be missing it once you dive into the action. *Tekken 5* is great because it not only refines the wall-attack system and other skills like counters, but it also remains totally accessible to even the most novice fighting-game fans. Sure, an experienced player should be able to take out any scrubs in no time, but the fact that someone with very little experience can still offer a surprise or two speaks volumes of how well defined *Tekken*'s fighting mechanics have become over the years. At the same time, it doesn't offer anything dramatically new, but that should be music to old *Tekken* fans' ears. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

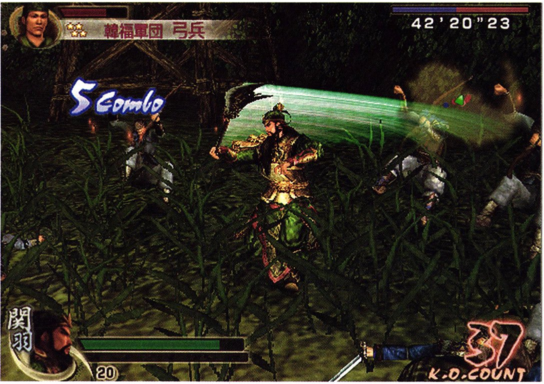
PROS Beautiful environments and characters, polished fighting mechanics
CONS No online play, nothing really original about the ranking system

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING ●●●●○



OH, SWEET PANDA
Tekken 5 really isn't as much about the fighting as it is about the torrid love affair between Panda and Kuma. One can only hope that the dark-hearted Panda will realize how much Kuma has to offer and that the two will make horrible-looking babies.



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MUSOU M
蜀 魏 呉 他
カンペイ
関平伝
勢力選択
ストーリー選択
決定

素直で純粋な青年武将。
武芸の腕を見込まれ、関羽の
となる。父に少しでも近づく
日々鍛錬をしている。

DYNASTY WARRIORS 5

THE TETRIS OF SEPTUAGENARIAN MURDER SIMULATORS

Dynasty Warriors now has seven iterations on the PS2, more updates than *Madden*. That's *Dynasty Warriors*, *Dynasty Warriors 2* through *5*, *Dynasty Warriors 4*: *Empires*, and *Dynasty Warriors: Xtreme Legends*. And like the annual football franchise, *Dynasty Warriors* progresses by way of gameplay tweaks, steady visual improvements, and a growing roster (up to 48 characters now). This year's model pushes the fog (annoying in previous installments) back to a reasonable horizon, eases the frustration of completing difficult areas by including midlevel saves, and speeds the action up a notch or two, all welcome improvements.

That said, how on earth could so many versions of this game exist? It can't be for the stories, these little chunks of Chinese historical fiction and myth told over and over again from a hundred different angles. I have a hard time not skipping them altogether. No, the hardcore fans who worship at the altar of this series have zeroed in on a very compelling kind of gameplay: massive action. And by massive, I mean tonnage, hundreds of soldiers onscreen existing only to be obliterated by one heroic five-o'clock-shadow-type on a combo binge.

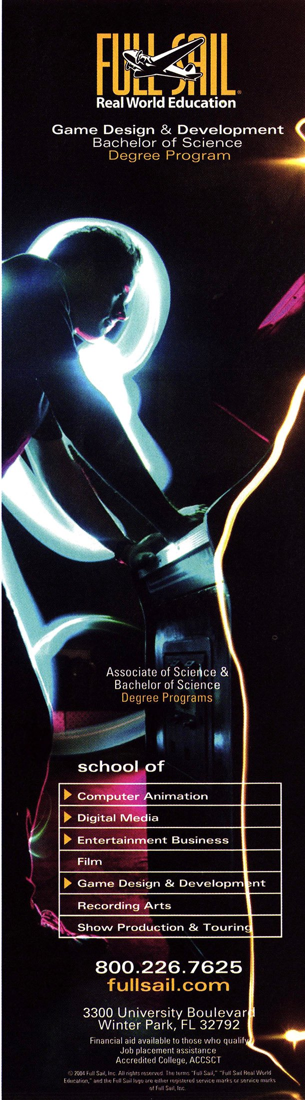
Of course, the hero (also available in fat guy with a club, skinny/busty/fast girl, effeminate spear-wielder, and other models) overpowers the enemy horde by a factor of 10 and spins, twirls, flips, and cartwheels like a ballerina. This game has a hard-to-define "nice feel," a pleasant connection between player and character. The action might draw fighting-game fans, but *Dynasty Warriors* has no real back-and-forth. Defense is what happens when you screw up. Disposing of a mess of soldiers feels more like clearing away a section of blocks in *Tetris*, like a victory for order over chaos. It's a game that, despite the constant repetition of environments, enemies, and button sequences, stays strangely engrossing.

In a gaming world full of immersive, attention-demanding experiences, *Dynasty Warriors* exists to let you tune out. Throw on some good music (you certainly don't want to hear the game's guitar-wailing butt rock or awkward voice acting, believe me), let your mind wander, and relieve a few thousand foot soldiers of their virtual lives. « *Robert Ashley*

PROS The best version to date of a great time killer
CONS Hopefully, you didn't spend $300 on the first six games

Pub. Koei **Dev.** Omega Force **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING ●●●◐○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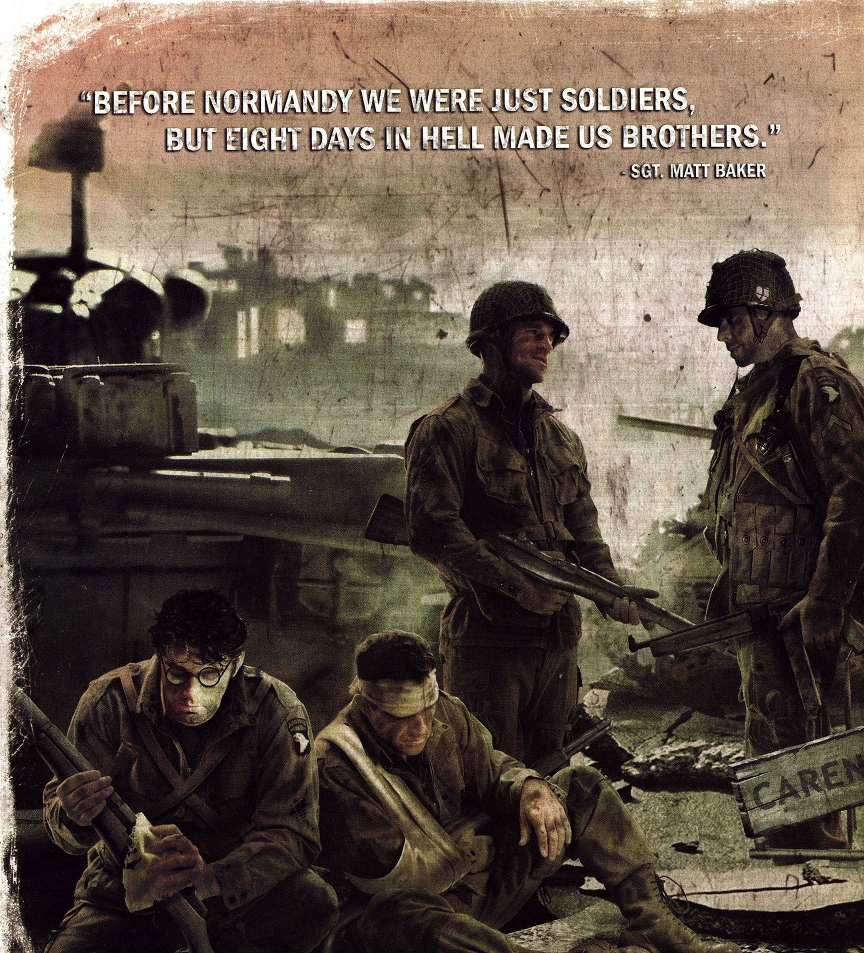
"BEFORE NORMANDY WE WERE JUST SOLDIERS,
BUT EIGHT DAYS IN HELL MADE US BROTHERS."
- SGT. MATT BAKER
CAREN

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language

PlayStation 2

ONLINE
BROADBAND ONLY

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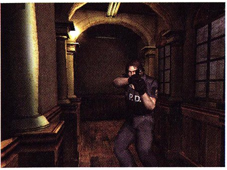

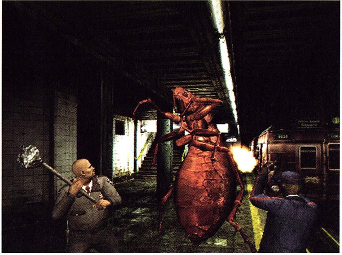

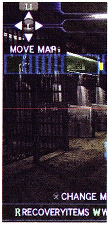

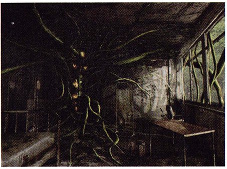

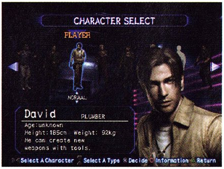

If user-friendly online gaming is ever going to become commonplace, then we pray that Capcom lets others lead the way. *Outbreak: File #2*'s interface is a mess of eye-aching colors and fonts, awkward soft keyboards, and needlessly technical menus and displays.

RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK: FILE #2

UNSPEAKABLE HORROR

Communication allows society to function—to ask, listen, tell, learn, coordinate, and advance ourselves as a species. Before the *Outbreak* series was unleashed upon the world, every publisher that released an online game—every single one—understood this simple concept. That people would intentionally make a game in which you can't directly communicate with other players does not make sense. That they'd do it twice is dumbfounding.

The concept behind the *Outbreak* series is one that you'd assume couldn't miss: Small groups of players team up to survive cleverly crafted scenarios in *Resident Evil*'s beautiful but deadly universe. The environments are lush and rich in detail, and the various scenarios are creative, requiring real teamwork and coordination, as well as the finely honed acumen one can possess only after acquiring years of "insert jade statue into slot" puzzle-solving experience. Each of the game's eight playable characters has a special skill that affects the team dynamic, and the different difficulty levels ensure that you won't play the same way more than once.

Only...you do. And it's usually a variation of this:

Our four players are in the same room.

Kevin: Let's go.

Yoko: Please go.

Mark: Wait.

George: Mark!

Yoko: Kevin!

George: Kevin!

Mark: Yoko!

Kevin: Let's go.

At this point, Mark and Yoko split from the group because the awkward camera angle prevents them from seeing which door Kevin and George went through.

Mark: Kevin!

George: Mark!

Yoko: George!

After wandering around aimlessly for a few minutes, Kevin and George are chased by an ax-wielding maniac who appears out of nowhere. They lose each other.

Kevin: George!

George: Kevin!

George, armed with only an iron pipe and a can of bug spray, dies. Kevin, unaware of George's death and unable to find Mark or Yoko, quits and logs off.

Mark (unaware that Kevin has quit): Kevin!

Yoko (unaware that George is dead): George!

Mark and Yoko run around the level for 10 minutes, looking for the comrades who are no longer there; then they give up and quit.

Now, imagine yourself in a similar real-life situation. There's a local zombie outbreak, and you're stuck in the middle of it with three strangers. Good luck trying to survive without using such helpful phrases as "I need to find some more shotgun shells," "If we get separated, let's meet up at the entrance," or "For the love of God please help me for I'm being stung to death by giant bees." The absence of long-range communication makes sense (that is, if you discount that whole cell phone technology thing), but MMORPGs and even games like *Halo 2* and *Splinter Cell* have utilized local communication, with which players can see text/hear voices only if they are standing near the source. Incorporating technology like this would make *Outbreak* work a whole lot better because the current method of using preset phrases and yelling each other's names is woefully inadequate.

In fact, it'd probably work too well. A team that knows how to solve a scenario and can effectively communicate how they're going to do it would likely find the game too easy...which can only lead one to believe that Capcom actually based *Outbreak* on poor communication, and the challenge comes from trying to figure out how to play the game instead of from the game itself. In other words: lazy design.

Raccoon City has seen its fair share of horrors over the years, but few are quite as abominable as this. « *Andrew Pfister*

VERDICT It's like trying to fly an airplane with no wings, and you can't even tell the passengers to kiss their asses good-bye.

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING ●◐○○○

True fear lies deep within your mind...

Fear. Panic. Terror.

You're lost in an eerie castle.
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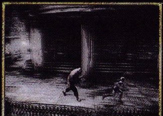

Panic Mode creates heightened tension and fear

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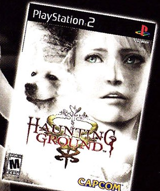
May 2005



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M
Blood
Suggestive Themes
Violence
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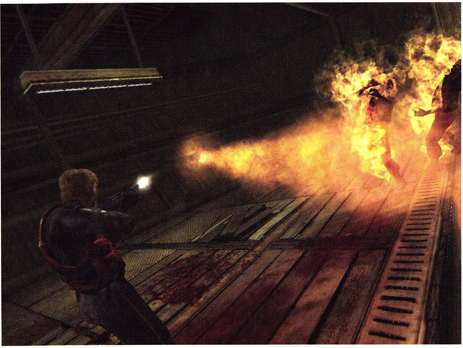
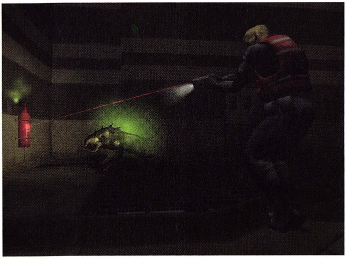




COLD FEAR

LUKEWARM CURIOSITY

In 1992, a little French game called *Alone in the Dark* quietly demonstrated many elements that are now considered central to the survival-horror genre; 13 years later, the creators of that title return to give us *Cold Fear*. Unfortunately, this game came out after the release of the phenomenal *Resident Evil 4* on GameCube and has been saddled with the unfair reputation of being an "*RE4* clone on a boat."

Cold Fear's horror atmosphere is well maintained, as the massive boat features rocking motions that induce seasickness, bloodied hallways, a shower of rain effects, and lots of foreboding creaking sounds. This dread is seen via a fixed third-person camera, with the occasional use of an over-the-shoulder view to aim and shoot at mutated humans and beasts.

As Coast Guard officer Tom Hansen investigates why mutated Russians are trying to eat him on a spooky whaling ship, he has a fair share of key hunting and puzzle solving to perform. This is all well and good, but it's completely hindered by the obnoxious save system that saves only at certain "key" checkpoints. Camera-angle changes create annoying situations in which the controls change as well. The shooting action, good and full of physics-related options at first, becomes stale and generic.

Cold Fear is a perfectly average survival-horror action game crafted by the genre's originators. But if you want something that elevates the genre, it's not this boat trip. « *Thierry Nguyen*

SCARE! Good atmosphere, decent action
BEWARE! Annoying save system, lackluster combat

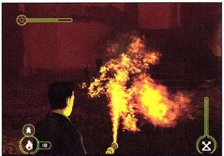
Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Darkworks **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING ●●●○○

REVISIONIST GAME HISTORY

The original *Alone in the Dark* franchise was infused with lots of cool H.P. Lovecraft references and monsters. None of that here, just crazy mutant Russians!

Both the *Constantine* movie and game are such loose adaptations of the comic *Hellblazer* (which is about John Constantine, who's something of a supernatural detective, or con man, depending on the writer) that it's barely worth acknowledging their connection. How loose? In the comic, Constantine is a cranky, old Brit whose appearance is modeled after Sting's. Far cry from Keanu.



CONSTANTINE

KEANU'S DESCENT INTO HELL

***Constantine* seems like** *Max Payne* with a liberal dose of hellfire and damnation: Whereas Payne would frequently have extremely disturbing nightmares that involved burning houses and blood-filled rooms, Constantine literally visits hell—several times, in fact.

Both games feature a gruff, cynical lead character who frequently walks down alleyways and corridors and tends to use his firearms as his negotiation tool; however, *Constantine* has a few unique traits that make it more than a *Max Payne* clone. Constantine's demonic vision (which lets him see demons in their true form and also proves handy for night vision and secret hunting) and spellcasting abilities are used in a fair number of puzzles, which helps flesh out the game. One example of this takes place when you encounter an obstructed door in hell: To get past it, Constantine teleports back to earth, moves a crate or shelf, and then teleports to hell again. Voilà, the moved item is present in hell and provides an alternate passage for Constantine.

Puzzles like these break up the pace of the standard-fare third-person shootery, different as it tries to be. Sure, Constantine uses a holy shotgun, but it's still a shotgun. A crucifix that shoots retrievable nails is still a machine gun (albeit a creatively designed one). The denizens of hell are like most demon spawn you've fought in other games: ugly and snarling. The levels themselves are decently constructed, ranging from hospitals and suspicious warehouses to a demon's apartment—the levels in hell look particularly astounding, though. Also, the bosses are kinda cool when you first meet them, but when the game reuses them, the freshness quickly expires.

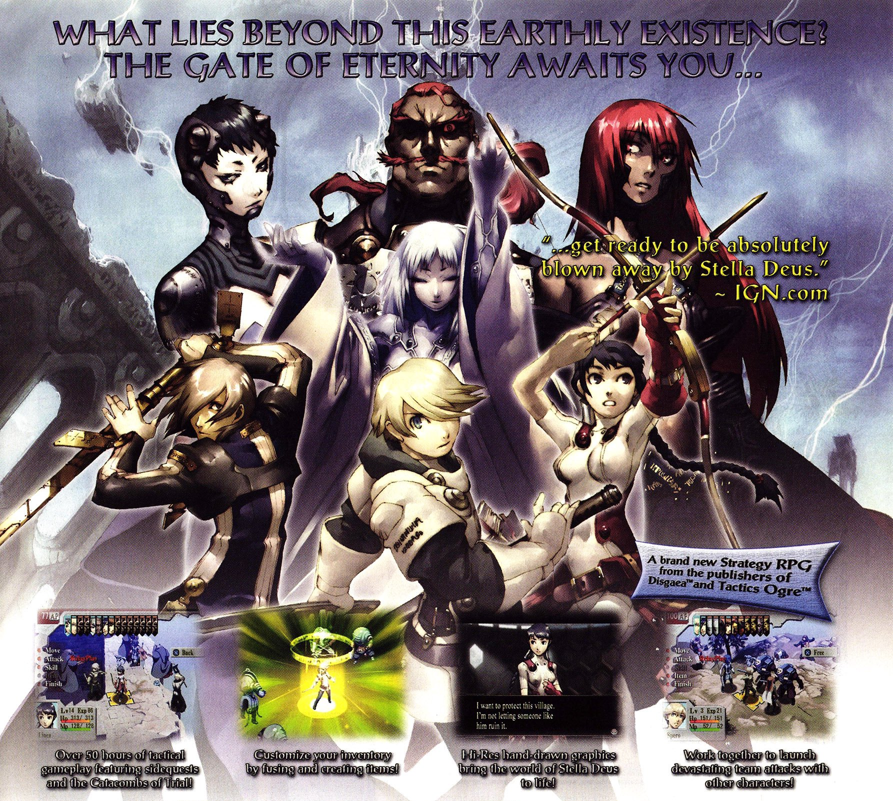
Constantine, much like its movie sibling, turns out to be a surprisingly passable piece of entertainment filled with flames and supernatural high jinks but is neither heavenly nor hellish. « *Thierry Nguyen*

VIRTUE Decent mix of puzzles and combat, sole chance to send Keanu into hell
VICE Repetitive and bland at times

Pub. THQ **Dev.** Bits Studio **ESRB** M **MSRP** $39.99

RATING ●●●○○

WHAT LIES BEYOND THIS EARTHLY EXISTENCE? THE GATE OF ETERNITY AWAITS YOU...



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SUPER MONKEY BALL DELUXE

A LITTLE BLUE

Having heard so much about *Super Monkey Ball*'s seductive qualities from my colleagues on Ziff's multiplatform mags, I was looking forward to a whirlwind romance with a quirky test of wits and reflexes. But after sampling the game's offerings, I find myself supremely unsatisfied and more than a little frustrated.

Here's my problem: In essence, *Monkey Ball* is all about getting from point A to point B. The thing is, the only real challenge arises from the game's quirky controls, physics, and camera. In other words, it's challenging not because the levels are deviously designed (though many are, to be sure), but because the game artificially cripples you with an unfriendly interface.

If that's what you look for in a puzzle-ish game, then you're going to love it. I'm just saying I don't. Luckily, there's a lot more to the game than the straight-up challenge mode—mainly an extensive collection of party games that are an absolute blast with human competition. Ranging from racing to baseball to bowling, the 12 minigames are funny and quirky. They're worth half the price of admission—at least—all by themselves.

And if you enjoy the kind of gameplay the challenge mode offers up, then you'll find plenty of diversions there, too—300, to be exact. With 114 levels from *Super Monkey Ball,* 140 from *Super Monkey Ball 2,* and 46 all-new levels, it's an extraordinary collection...one that you'll need extraordinary patience to make it through. « *Joe Rybicki*

VERDICT There's enough content to keep puzzle fans busy, but expect plenty of frustration, too.

Pub. Sega **Dev.** Sega **ESRB** E **MSRP** $29.99

RATING ●●●○○

ALSO TRY

If you have an EyeToy, check out *Sega Superstars*, which features a Monkey Ball minigame that you control by tilting your arms.

ROBOTS

A SHORT TRIP FROM THE FACTORY TO THE JUNKYARD

Ah, the fetch quest. The concept is generic enough to fit any story, leading players through familiar movie locales, introducing them to major and minor characters (who all seem to have lost something and require your help finding it) along the way. *Robots* pours into this prefab mold, creating for its mechanical characters an equally mechanical game.

I haven't seen the movie (which is not out as of this review), but I'm pretty sure it doesn't involve a young Ewan McGregor–voiced robot jumping from platformlike cog to platformlike sprocket in search of piles of metal junk. I'm also pretty sure that he doesn't shoot said metal junk from a pipe gun at vicious mechanical attack dogs and acid-proof robot fish. If capping the mutated inmates of Showbiz Pizza were any fun, excuses could be made, but you're forced into a first-person view to be able to hit anything.

Of course, none of this matters. The monotony of item collecting will turn anyone off long before frustration over poor control sets in. And even though trails of nuts and bolts usually lead you to your next assignment, I was completely lost several times. I'm sure a youngster would give up pretty early on, not that I'd let any kid of mine near this scrap heap.

So many people make a fuss about kids playing adult games that it seems the games actually made for kids escape criticism altogether. Instead of engaging a child's imagination, many of these games, like *Robots,* simply waste their time. « *Robert Ashley*

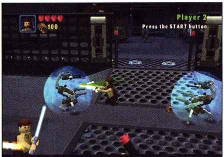
VERDICT This industrial cookie cutter churns out a thousand copies of the same awful treat.

Pub. Sierra **Dev.** Eurocom **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING ●○○○○

STAR WARS EPISODE IV

Yes, there are four doors in the cantina (the game's "hub"). That fourth door is an extra bonus level that takes place in *Episode IV.*



LEGO STAR WARS

THE PREQUEL TRILOGY IN FOUR HOURS

10:00 a.m. Time to load this up. This looks way kiddie. What's with this cantina and the four doors? I guess I'll go in door No. 1.

10:03 a.m. Whoa, Lego Qui-Gon just used the Force to smash that Lego droid trooper!

10:45 a.m. Hey! I'm at the pod race! I wish the *Episode I* movie was this fast! This pod race is a little annoying and repetitive.

11:15 a.m. I just finished the Darth Maul fight, and I bought a Lego Darth Maul for 25,000 Lego studs in the main cantina area. This is the greatest *Star Wars* game ever.

12:05 p.m. After two more "action and puzzle" levels in *Episode II,* I'm on level 3, which is already at the Jedi battle. This game realizes that the first hour and a half of the movie is garbage and goes straight to the awesome. Bravo.

12:25 p.m. Holy crap, this "pilot the gunships" level is straight out of *Zaxxon*! This is way better than the pod-racing level was.

12:40 p.m. Oh damn! Playable Yoda! All he does is badass Force backflips! Someone just plugged a controller in and is now playing as Obi-Wan. And my coworker isn't as cooperative as the buddy AI.

1:00 p.m. Whoa, I'm starting *Episode III.* I'm watching an advanced preview of the next movie, but done in Lego form.

1:04 p.m. This space battle is just as annoying as the pod racing. It also has inverted controls that you can't change!

1:19 p.m. Oh man, General Grievous is a cool boss. He has four lightsabers! Four!

1:34 p.m. Hot damn, I'm on Kashyyyk! I've got playable Wookiees!

1:50 p.m. Oh man, I'm playing Obi-Wan and Anakin on a lava planet. This doesn't bode well....

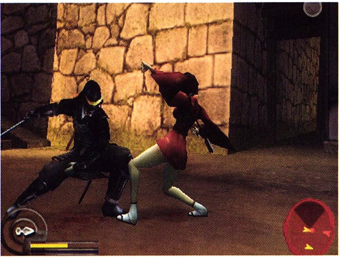
2:02 p.m. Wait, I just finished *Episode III.*

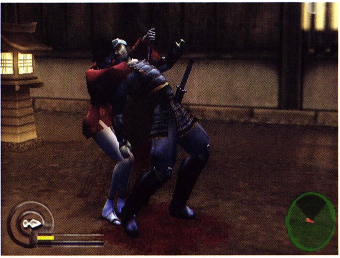
2:05 p.m. Oh cool, I can buy new characters and replay any level to check out hidden areas. But still, I finished the game. Then again, I have to find all the hidden goodies in order to unlock Darth Vader, so there's a little more life to this game. « *Thierry Nguyen*

ORIGINAL TRILOGY Cool Lego visuals, decent puzzles and action, co-op mode, hyperedited versions of less-than-stellar movies
PREQUEL TRILOGY Can be finished in four hours

Pub. Giant Int. **Dev.** Traveller's Tales **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING ●●●●○





RED NINJA: END OF HONOR

THE WORLD'S MOST AVERAGE NINJA

Ninjas are cool for many reasons: They can kill enemies within seconds, perform the most amazing feats of agility, and throw smoke bombs to escape from perilous situations. There are plenty more examples of ninja awesomeness, but that should give you a good idea why *Red Ninja*'s protagonist, Kurenai, is, in fact, a poor ninja.

It's no fault of her own. Most ninjas don't have to worry about maneuvering a floating camera behind their backs in order to move into position before a kill. Unfortunately, Kurenai constantly has to put up a fight with the camera while stalking even the simplest of enemies or attempting to make leaps from ledge to ledge. It makes much of the game needlessly frustrating, but even if the camera wasn't a problem, there really isn't much to *Red Ninja*.

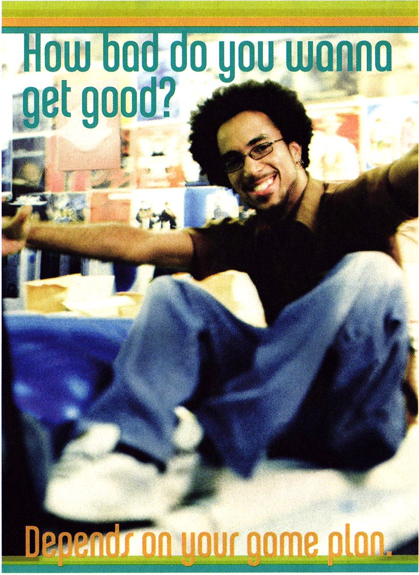
The game has only a couple of stealth attacks that you can perform, and the basic combat is incredibly simple but also clumsy due to somewhat sluggish controls. *Red Ninja*'s only real redeeming quality is the implementation of a wire as the main weapon. You can perform some pretty cool kills once you learn how to use its tension in conjunction with different objects in the environment. It also comes in particularly handy when facing a group of foes. Using the wire is generally more entertaining than sticking with Kurenai's standard dagger attacks, but unfortunately, using it effectively can also be difficult since, again, the camera causes some problems.

Still, this game just isn't anything special. It's a very basic portrayal of the ninja lifestyle, and as such, there's nothing that will really keep your interest, particularly considering the poor camera and spotty controls. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

NINJAS The wire weapon is a great idea that's never really taken full advantage of
PIRATES Annoying save system, lackluster combat

Pub. Vivendi Univ. **Dev.** Tranji **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING ●●◐○○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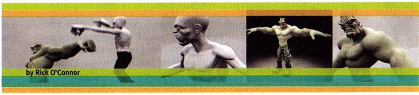
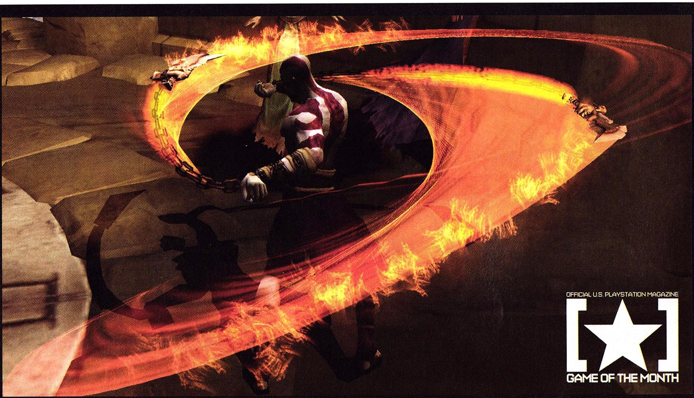


GOD OF WAR

WHAT'S IN A REVIEW?



GOD'S TREASURES

Once you've beaten the game, a slew of bonuses are unlocked. You can play the insanely difficult God mode, watch all the cut-scenes in a row, get behind-the-game peeks, and open up the God Challenges, a sequence of 10 tasks that unlocks further items, including alternate costumes for Kratos.

I love *God of War*.

We often get e-mails from readers charging us to write more "objective" reviews. Per this philosophy, game scores should be based on a rubric of sorts. Let's take fictional fighting game *Street King of Mortal Calibur Smackdown* as an example. How are the game's fighting mechanics? They're pretty decent, so let's say 7 points out of 10. Graphics? Eh, a 3 out of 10—it's pretty ugly. And so on and so forth. At the end, tally up the points and figure out how the score translates to whatever rating system you're dealing with.

Is that a wrong way to evaluate games? I'm not sure. I *do* know that this is the method used to rate a lot of games. And I confess that this is how I've rated more than a couple of games myself.

If *God of War* were judged according to an objective method, it would not get the score that I'm giving it. The puzzle solving involves a little too much pushing and pulling of objects. There could be a few more bosses. The length is probably kind of short for most people's tastes.

But I don't care.

This game sucked me in from the very opening scene, in which Kratos stands at the edge of a cliff, about to throw himself to the depths below. The story, your basic tale of revenge and redemption, isn't groundbreaking, but it is well told. While franchises can be beautiful things, I loved playing as a new character with no baggage, no history—you could almost call it the perfect one-night stand. I got to become Kratos. It was, in its way, like starring in my own movie.

In fact, the whole game plays like a movie. The story line and resulting gameplay are very linear. The fixed camera, something that typically drives me batty, reinforces the cinematic feeling by zooming out and swooping around, giving you perspectives you'd never see if you were the one in control.

The graphics are more beautiful than any PS2 game's graphics deserve to be. When developers spend time expounding on the beauty of water effects and light streaming, all I hear is "blah blah blah." But this is actually a game in which they're worth pointing out. When you're fighting in a room with a highly polished marble floor, take the time to look down at the floor and see the combat reflections. The water effects actually *are* pretty amazing—I ran through every reflecting pool I came across just to see at the splashes I could make.

Then know that this is all augmented by movie-quality cut-scenes that I actually wanted to watch. I hate cut-scenes—the only time I don't skip past them is when I think I might miss out on information I need for the next part of a game. During *God of War*, I actually hushed someone in my office who started talking during a cut-scene.

GENDER BENDER
The narrator for *God of War* is Linda Hunt, who is best known for her role as Billy Kwan in *The Year of Living Dangerously.* She won an Oscar for her performance, making her the only person to ever win for playing a member of the opposite sex.

But the really cool stuff is the action. When the mother Hydra head screams in the opening level, you can almost feel the blast that emanates from her mouth. The animations of the blades of chaos as they rip through the torsos of your enemies are so awesome that you *are* Kratos. And as Kratos, you can render gore galore as you tear a swath of destruction through the game—watch vultures plucking eyeballs from corpses and heads bursting off in showers of blood.

Combat is smooth. Button mashing can suffice on easier difficulty levels, but even then, it's rewarding to learn the combos, thanks to the gorgeous animations of Kratos using his blades. The god powers that you earn along the way can be helpful, too—I made the most use of Poseidon's rage and Hades' demons—but they're not quite as cool to wield as the blades are.

Between bouts of mutilation, you get to exercise your brain a bit by solving puzzles. A few may cause a bit of head scratching, but there's nothing so maddening that you end up beating your head against a wall. And thankfully, all puzzles are fairly contained within their individual levels, so you don't end up retracing your steps to find an item that you failed to see the first time around. The one complaint I have is that too many solutions involve pushing and pulling objects.

My favorite thing about *God of War* is that it reminded me why I like to play games. Many developers spend the bulk of their energy coming up with ways to make their games different, to do something innovative. But that's the wrong focus. The bulk of your energy should be focused on making the game good. Who cares if you've provided me with a new move that no gaming character has ever executed before if it's wrapped up in crappy gameplay and a half-assed story? People do not play games because they break new ground. People play games because they are fun. And fun is *God of War*'s greatest strength.

On a rubric, you could take away points for nitpicky weaknesses in *God of War*. However, I didn't care about the minor flaws, because I was enjoying myself so much, and enjoyment is just one of those things that a rubric can't sufficiently measure. This is not a perfect game, but it is a great one. « *Dana Jongewaard*

VERDICT David Jaffe and co. didn't waste time reinventing the wheel. Instead, they put all their energy into making that wheel into a 265/30R22 Michelin with a custom-painted 22-inch F-Metal 1 rim.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Sony CEA **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING ●●●●●

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Violence

Produced by ω-Force

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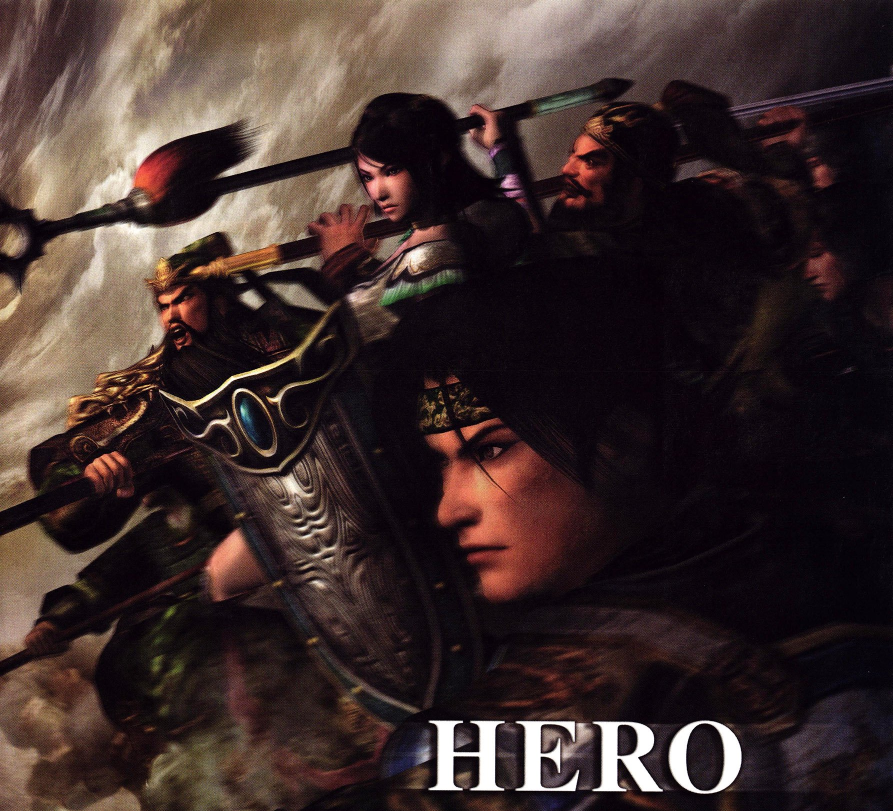

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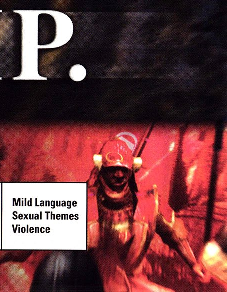

TEEN
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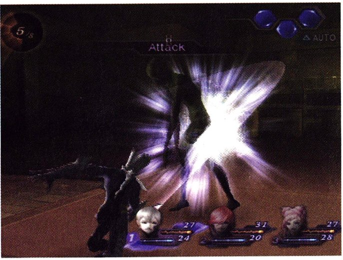
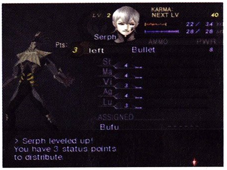
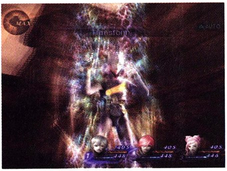
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

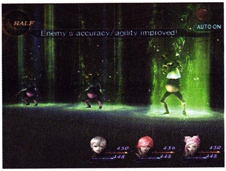
Mild Language
Sexual Themes
Violence



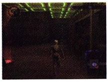


> Serph leveled up!
You have 3 status points to distribute.



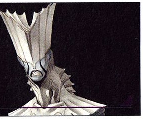


Enemy's accuracy/agility improved!



"Shin Megami Tensei" roughly (and we stress *roughly*) translates into "The True Reincarnation of the Goddess."

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DIGITAL DEVIL SAGA



NIRVANA IS MORE THAN COBAIN, NOVOSELIC, AND GROHL

With the *Final Fantasy* franchise and its fan base busy holding their enormous breaths while waiting for *FFXII* to come along, the RPG landscape has been populated with non-*FF* games trying to stake their own claim. Last year, for the first time in a long while, the best RPG wasn't a *FF* title, but the obscure (on this side of the Pacific, at least) and unmistakably Japanese-named *Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne*. *Nocturne* took many familiar elements of console RPGs and injected a massive dose of difficulty, theology, and artistry, which all fused into something that was actually new and different. *Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga* does an admirable job of maintaining *Nocturne*'s good qualities while also using elements of other RPGs to become a little more accessible.

Just as *FFX* isn't a direct follow-up to *FFIX*, so is *DDS* not a sequel to *Nocturne*. They share the Press Turn battle system, most of the enemies (actually, 85 percent, plus a few new bosses), and a zest for using nontraditional religious elements in the story, but there is no direct plot relation between the two. So while *DDS* doesn't feature a pitched battle between Lucifer and, er, God, it's safe to say it's the only game featuring postapocalyptic human/demon (a mysterious pod emits weird rays that turn everyone into human-demon hybrids) tribes fighting over the right to enter Nirvana. As dictated by a possessed cylindrical computer claiming to be "Angel." You play as Serph, the leader of the Embryon tribe, as he tries to figure out why a singing girl named Sera can control the demons, as well as fights the other tribes for Nirvana.

While the story line remains as bizarre as *Nocturne*'s, the gameplay is a little more like *FFX*'s. Instead of four party members onscreen like in *Nocturne*, there are three (à la *FFX*). Instead of fusing demons and having them learn skills, your characters gain karma points that go toward mantras (sets of skills), learning skills on a massive skill chart (which looks suspiciously like *FFX*'s Sphere Grid). The game begins with eight basic mantra types, but as your characters learn more, mantras like Death Magic, HP Drain, and Ultimate Magic start opening up. The cut-scenes now have voice acting, and there are more of them (one between almost every dungeon) than in *Nocturne*.

This *Final Fantasizing* makes *DDS* a more accessible game than *Nocturne*, but some of *Nocturne*'s complexity is lost as a result. It's now a lot easier and more straightforward to manage your party's skills, but your party is pretty fixed and static. You can no longer talk to enemies or bribe them into your party; you simply kill them or run away. Then again, just because it's more accessible doesn't mean it's a cakewalk. *DDS* still has some of the hardest RPG battles, and in fact, because skills are easier to manage, you absolutely have to figure out which ones work best against whatever enemy you're facing or else you'll lose. A lot. The dungeons are even harder, containing more wacky puzzles (which are uneven in quality).

You might notice that *DDS* comes in a slipcase designed for two DVDs; this is because a sequel is definitely coming out. This also explains the *Halo 2*–esque cliff-hanger ending, which might irk some people. Despite the more simplistic nature that could seem to *Nocturne* fans like a step backward, this might make it a better game for *FF* fans needing their fix. Or anyone else looking for an RPG that combines *FFX*, *The Ramayana*, and *Mad Max*. « *Thierry Nguyen*

GOOD KARMA More straightforward storytelling and skill building, same great art style, unafraid of being unconventional
BAD KARMA Not as much depth as *Nocturne*, recycled enemies, an ending that demands you buy the sequel

Pub. Atlus **Dev.** Atlus **ESRB** M **MSRP** $54.99

RATING ●●●●○

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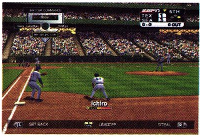

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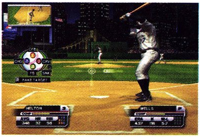

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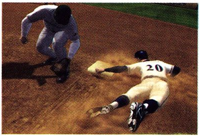

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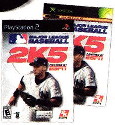

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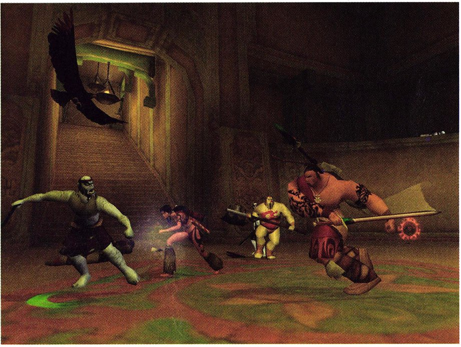
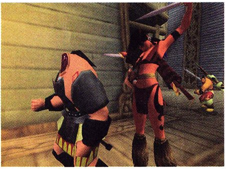
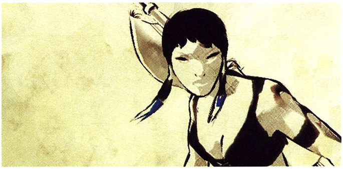






RISE OF THE KASAI

DOES CHALLENGING EQUAL GOOD?

While Sony's action-adventure *Rise of the Kasai*—follow-up to 2002's *The Mark of Kri*—suffers from AI that's dumber than dirt, it's a straightforward ride from start to finish. Intentional or not, *ROTK* is an easy but largely fun diversion. The game's plot is epic and compelling, alternating between 10 years before (when you play as warriors Baumusu and Griz) and 10 years after (with you as either warrior Rau or his sister Tati) *TMOK*'s events.

Supporting this are beautiful and distinctive cut-scenes that have a fluid, calligraphic look. The actual in-game art style is cartoonish but workable: Its appearance is sort of Don Bluth in 3D, giving the characters and environments a smooth, affable look. Even the M-rated violence is more funny than upsetting.

Nothing about *ROTK*'s gameplay is particularly over the top, though (especially when contrasted with the testosterone-crazed *God of War*'s). *ROTK* isn't dull, just understated. You can get through almost the entire game in stealth mode, but there is plenty of combat, and those who played *TMOK* will find the handy targeting system familiar. Despite some interesting combos, you can get through enemy onslaughts with tried-and-true button mashing. Weapon and character variety is balanced, and gameplay changes slightly depending on which character you choose.

It's the AI—both foe and friend—that's just dumb and dumber. More often than not, you can take out an enemy with a range weapon while his fellow guard—standing right next to him—appears not to notice. Your AI partner isn't much better, sometimes running into danger with no way to stop him. The combat system lets you lock onto several foes at once, which is useful, but don't do this near your partner. You'll hit him (and inflict damage) as often as you hit your enemies. *ROTK* should have had two-player co-op—there are several levels where a live partner would make an immense amount of sense.

Rise of the Kasai proves that a game can still be compelling without being impossible to play. The real fun is in seeing the story unfold—and once in a while, that's OK. « *Tom Byron*

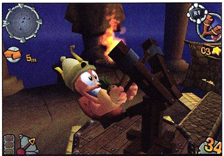
VERDICT A pleasingly straightforward action-adventure that suffers from really dumb AI.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** BottleRocket **ESRB** M **MSRP** $39.99

RATING ●●●◐○

PRETTY PICTURES

A sumi-brush art style gives *Rise of the Kasai*'s cut-scenes an elegant and distinctive look. The movies were spearheaded by BottleRocket's cinematic director Erik Medina.



WORMS FORTS: UNDER SIEGE

A CLUMSILY BAITED HOOK

I have no idea how many hours I spent playing *Worms II* online on the PC. My guess is the number is probably in the thousands. I loved that game. There was something about the combination of hardcore strategy (turn based, but with a time limit), the game's wacky tone, and some truly insane weapons. It was fun and fast, simple to learn but incredibly difficult to master—in short, the perfect recipe for an addictive game.

Which is why *Under Siege* comes as a moderate disappointment. All the elements appear to be there: The humor, the oddball weapons, and the basic setup all seem unchanged. But the move to 3D and the added strategy of fort building throw the delicately balanced formula out of whack.

It's hard enough calculating ballistics models for long-range weapons when you're just worrying about gravity. But move everything into 3D and you suddenly have to worry about aim, trajectory, and the added vector of lateral wind movement. It's nearly impossible to calculate in any way except tedious trial and error, and the game offers no help. The result is that *Under Siege* is much more challenging than the early games in the series.

On top of this we have the process of strategically building towers in order to capture "victory points" (to upgrade buildings) and strengthen any weak points in your fort. This is fairly interesting, but construction of a serious base takes so long that you rarely have time to really exploit this feature. It's also fairly disappointing that only forts are destructible; gone are the fully deformable environments made possible by the original 2D layout and the interesting strategies that deformation allowed.

Nevertheless, the core of *Worms*-iness is still there, meaning *Under Siege* is still an entertaining, unusual strategy title—especially considering how few examples of the genre we have on the PS2. I just wish it had that pick-up-and-go, addictive quality of its predecessors. « *Joe Rybicki*

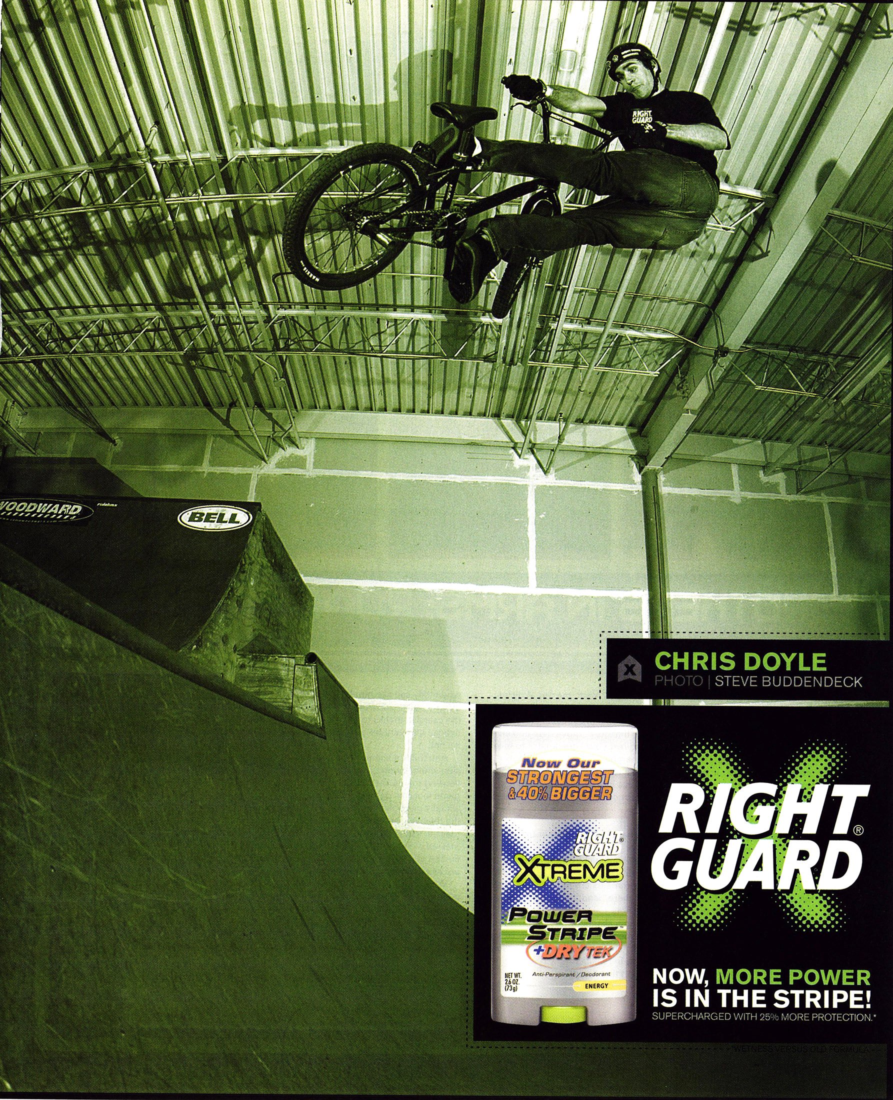
VERDICT Earlier games in the series made strategy fans out of newbies. This one makes newbies out of strategy fans.

Pub. Sega **Dev.** Team 17 **ESRB** T **MSRP** $29.99

RATING ●●●○○

ANNELID ANGST

One of the trademarks of the 11-year-old *Worms* series is its utterly bizarre weapons. *Under Siege* meets expectations with weapons like a troop of explosive monkeys, a rocket-powered hippo, and a mortar that fires bishops who explode on contact and shower explosive Bibles upon enemies below. Erm...yeah.



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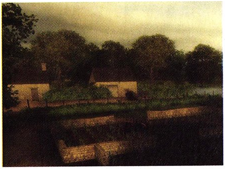
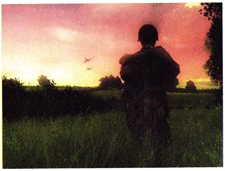
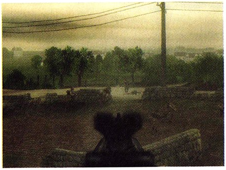




Brothers in Arms' online mode is truly unique, because it gives each player at least one squad to command (except in a few specialized game types). This means you can have a reasonably fleshed-out experience just 1-on-1, which is a nice change from the FPS norm. Unfortunately, your squadmates are no more intelligent online than they are in the single-player campaign, which means they basically serve only as decoys. And other flaws, like the odd respawn system (which appears to reward careless play by only respawning allies when everyone on your team has been wiped out) and the overlarge levels, make online play more of a novelty than anything else. It's something you'll fire up one evening, think "Hey, that's kinda neat," and then never play again.



BROTHERS IN ARMS: ROAD TO HILL 30

WITH BROTHERS LIKE THESE...

Tired of World War II first-person shooters yet? Yeah, me too. Which is why I was so intrigued by *Brothers in Arms*. The idea is that you're never working alone—you have squads of fellow soldiers you can direct with a surprising degree of precision; it's more than just "move here and shoot everything you come across." You can direct your squadmates to take cover, lay down suppressive fire, and charge individual enemies or groups of enemies...in addition to "move here and shoot everything you come across." You can even enlist vehicles into your roster, manning the machine gun on the back of a tank, for example, as you direct its movement.

It's a great idea, right?

Too bad it just doesn't work. Part of the problem is that your brothers in arms are neither terribly intelligent nor terribly great shots. Remember that scene in *Shaun of the Dead* where Shaun picks up the rifle and discovers that he can't shoot worth a damn? It's kind of like that. One memorable instance had me sending three teammates around a corner to take out a single German I knew was hiding there...and they got positively destroyed, after firing off maybe three shots.

So much for Army training. But it seems like these guys were just born stupid. For instance, when I specify an enemy for them to suppress, why don't they at least look around for a clear shot? If they're behind cover, they just sit there. Picture this happening in real life:

"Private! Lay down suppressing fire on that Kraut!"

"YES, SERGEANT!"

"Private! Why aren't you moving?"

"I CANNOT SEE HIM, SERGEANT!"

I mean, we're talking court martial or worse. And it's just as frustrating when they can see him but are clearly too far out of range to have any effect whatsoever. (And I can see quite clearly the ineffectual nature of the exercise thanks to the clever suppression meter over enemies' heads.) It's every bit as useful as firing wildly into the sky. Which is to say, it's not.

And that's a shame. Because it is a really neat idea, and on the occasion when it works, it's very exciting. Pulling off a successful two-squad flanking maneuver is satisfying as hell. It's also unfortunate because the game looks so damn good. This is the first WWII game I can think of that actually gives the impression of taking place in a living place (even if it is the relatively sparsely populated countryside of France). You have very realistic-looking foliage all over the place, with crumbling country houses making a nice contrast. And if this graphical detail comes at the cost of limited animation in friends and enemies, at least the character models are as nice looking as the environments.

While I can't enthusiastically recommend this game as more than a curiosity for FPS fans looking for a little more strategy, I do have to say I'm hoping for a sequel—because if the designers can make this idea work the way it should, it could revolutionize the whole FPS genre. It's just not going to happen this time around. « *Joe Rybicki*

MEDAL OF HONOR When the strategic squad combat works, it's neat
COURT MARTIAL The strategic squad combat rarely works

Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Gearbox **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING ●●●○○

The next big thing in entertainment is surprisingly small.

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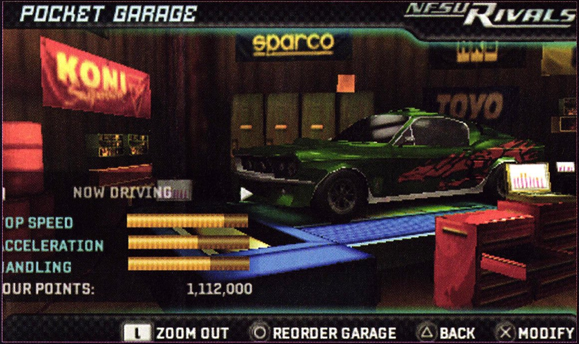
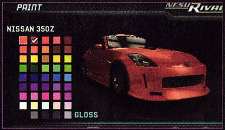
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND RIVALS

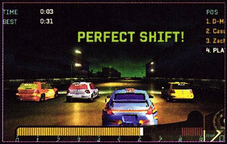
TUNER OVERLOAD

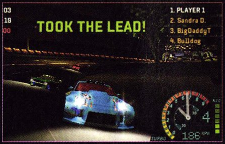

POCKET GARAGE
NFSU RIVALS
sparco
KONI
TOYO
NOW DRIVING
OP SPEED
CCELERATION
ANDLING
OUR POINTS:
1,112,000
L ZOOM OUT
○ REORDER GARAGE
△ BACK
✕ MODIFY


PAINT
NFSU RIVAL
NISSAN 350Z
GLOSS

POCKET GARAGE
NFSU RIVAL

3/3
0:54
1:48
+0:20
POS
3/4
1. STEWART
2. LEBRÓN
3. JIM
4. JARED


TIME
0:03
BEST
0:31
POS
PERFECT SHIFT!


TOOK THE LEAD!
1. PLAYER 1
2. Sandra D.
3. BigDaddyT
4. Bulldog

If you're looking for a game that adequately bridges the gap between the PS2 and the PSP, you don't really have to look any further than *Need for Speed Underground Rivals*. It has more content than almost any other PSP racing game available at launch, and its mechanics are very similar to those of its console counterparts. With that being said, it's a little too much like the console versions in certain respects, at least in the main single-player mode.

It certainly isn't a bad experience; it's just a little more frustrating than it really should be. You start off with a base car, usually a low-end vehicle like a Mazda Miata. Unfortunately, this makes it kind of difficult to perform well in the early races—not only does your car flat-out suck, but the game really makes you pay for minor mistakes, almost to the point that you can't recover. These early races should be much more forgiving than they are. Even when you start to win a few races and earn points to purchase upgrades, it's still pretty difficult. But after a few hours or so, you should be able to start winning enough to get some extra cars that can do a much better job against the competition. Part of the difficulty stems from the depth of the racing mechanics: You probably won't be able to drift well right away, but you'd better learn how; otherwise, those races will be all the more evil.

Still, if you don't find the main single-player mode to your liking, *Rivals* has plenty of other fun options. The party mode games, where you essentially pass the PSP to other people and take turns racing, are particularly fun because they're so straightforward and simple that anyone can pick up the PSP and give it a go. Plus, they create sort of an old-school competitive feeling that makes them even more addictive. The same applies to regular multiplayer, but again, you really need to go through the single-player mode and unlock the higher-tier cars if you want to get the most out of these modes.

If you're already a fan of the *Need for Speed Underground* games, though, these complaints should be familiar to you. As such, if you go in knowing what to expect, then you'll no doubt have a great time with the game. However, if you're just a racing fan looking for something quick, fun, and easy to get into while you're out and about, then *Rivals* may not be the best option. It's a good game, but its depth just won't appeal to everyone. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS Great graphics, deep mechanics, lots of variety in race types
CONS Early portion of single-player game just isn't all that fun

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Games **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

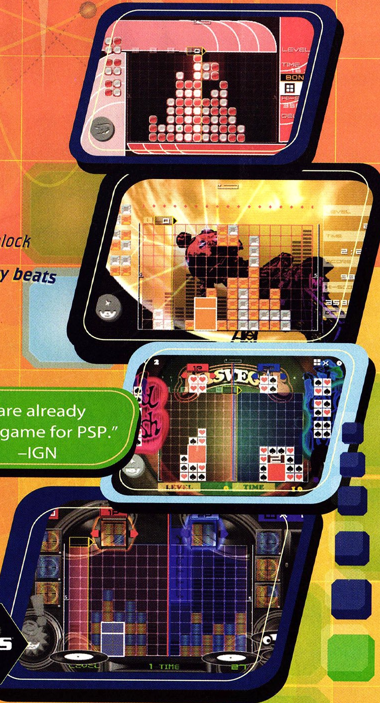
RATING [●●●◐○]

CUSTOMIZATION CRAZY

Just like its console counterparts, *Rivals* has plenty of customization features. Not only can you change the visual aspects of your car by adding spoilers, scoops, body kits, and a variety of other things, but you can also modify a car's performance. Thankfully, making these upgrades has been made as simple as possible. All you have to do is choose what you want to upgrade and basically spend your points on which parts you specifically want to change. Good stuff.

LUMINES™

PUZZLE FUSION



are you lumines?

*bust blocks, **groove** through puzzles and*

*jam **wirelessly** against friends*

stack 'em right and you'll unlock

*lush levels and **buttery beats***

want to be lumines?

"The game many are already calling the best game for PSP."
–IGN

LUMINES

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EVERYONE
E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Suggestive Themes

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UNTOLD LEGENDS: BROTHERHOOD OF THE BLADE

ADDICTED TO MEDIOCRITY

There was a time when *Diablo* was the hottest thing in gaming. PC gamers logged zillions of hours hacking their way through randomly generated dungeons, picking up randomly distributed loot, and slowly upgrading their characters' abilities, weapons, armor, and other assorted gear. The most cerebral moments involved figuring out which items to drop once your character became overloaded. It was, in essence, a slightly (but only slightly) more complex version of the original *Gauntlet*: hack, slash, pick up, repeat ad nauseam.

On paper it sounds boring as hell, but there's just something inherently addictive in this formula. That's why *Untold Legends*, while not putting a single toe outside the well-worn *Diablo* mold, still manages to be a pretty good time.

And that's quite a feat, because the game really doesn't try too hard to make you like it. The story is fairly forgettable, the character classes are unremarkable, the writing is pretty awful, the graphics are utterly mediocre, and the level design is...well, it's random, isn't it? So it feels very, well, random.

But in spite of all that, there is definitely something eminently satisfying about the simplicity of *Untold Legends*' gameplay. Perhaps it's the same thing that keeps people coming back to *EverQuest*: the simple desire to see what the better weapons and armor look like. That, and seeing just how powerful you can make your character—it's the modern equivalent of trying to get the high score on the *Pac-Man* machine in the local doughnut shop.

The fact that you can work cooperatively with up to three other players brings bragging rights into play; you can bring your friends into your current game (or start a new one together, if that's your preference) and show off your duds—or enlist a more powerful ally to help you beat a tough boss. There's absolutely nothing special or noteworthy about multiplayer, though; it's a bonus mode, nothing more.

Come to think of it, there's nothing special or noteworthy about the game at all—except for the fact that once you put some time in, it's harder to put down than it has any right to be. « *Joe Rybicki*

VERDICT Both utterly forgettable and strangely addictive, the ultra-simple hack-n-slash model works surprisingly well in a portable format.

Pub. Sony Online Ent. **Dev.** Sony Online Ent. **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING ●●●○○

HACK-N-SLASH HISTORY

Diablo II earned a coveted spot in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the fastest-selling computer game ever, with more than 1 million units sold in its first two weeks of release. *Diablo* and *Diablo II* together have sold over 5 million units to date.

POSITION
4/12
LAP RECORD
1'31"566
TOTAL TIME
4'12"037
LAP TIME
1'36"757
1'31"566
1'03"714

POSITION
6/12
LAP RECORD
TOTAL TIME
LAP TIME

RIDGE RACER

BEAUTIFUL IN ITS SIMPLICITY

Darn it! It's been nearly five years since we've had a proper *Ridge Racer* appear on a PlayStation console (*R: Racing Evolution* most definitely doesn't count), and during most of that time, people have been pleading—nay, begging—Namco to release another game in the series. As the years passed, it seemed less and less likely to happen, and fans slowly started to accept this fact. Now, Namco has gone and released a compilation of all the previous *Ridge Racer* games in portable form.

If you're a fan of the series or even a fan of pure arcade-style racing, then this should make you very happy. Even as an arcade racing game, *Ridge Racer* has a fair amount of depth. The whole point of the game is to master the drifting technique for different cars, and while you should have absolutely no problems executing drifts seconds after you jump into the game, it takes a while to really master. And you absolutely need to master it. With the addition of turbo boosts that you charge by performing drifts, there's an added incentive to drift as often as possible without making any mistakes. This definitely gives the game a new layer of depth and makes races quite tense. Additionally, the fact that the new boost feature works so well with tracks that weren't specifically designed for it speaks volumes of just how well they were designed in the first place.

Also, there's just an undeniably addictive aspect to *Ridge Racer*'s single-player and multiplayer modes. The world tour offers plenty of tracks from *Ridge Racer* games of the past, as well as dozens of cars to unlock that have different speed and drifting abilities. Multiplayer supports up to eight players, and while they can be a little jittery at the very start, these races are just a blast to play. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

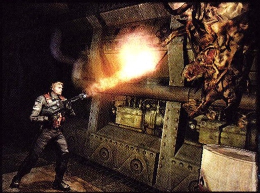
PROS Pure arcade racing fun
CONS Multiplayer is a little jumpy at times

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

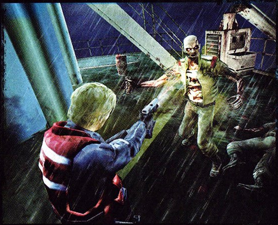
RATING ●●●●◐

For a complete history of the *Ridge Racer* franchise, check out our "Behind the Game" feature in this month's Replay section. You'll find it on page 138.

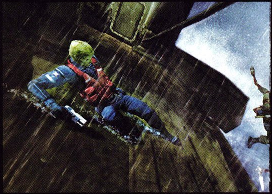
ON A HELLBOUND VESSEL,



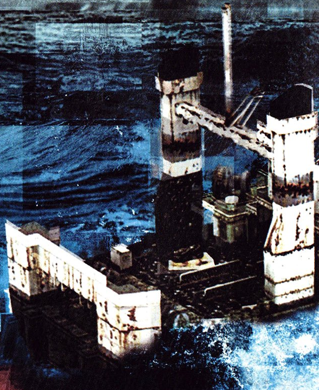
UNLEASH A TORRENT OF WEAPONS:
CREATE FATAL TRAPS AND USE SHOTGUNS, FLAME THROWERS, OR ANY OBJECT YOU CAN FIND TO SURVIVE.



KEEP YOUR BEARINGS:
BATTLE AGAINST INCREASINGLY MUTATED ENEMIES IN TREACHEROUS, UNSTABLE ENVIRONMENTS.



BRAVE DANGEROUS WATERS:
ROCKED BY HUGE BREAKERS, YOU MUST STEADY YOUR NERVES – AND AIM – TO EVADE A WATERY GRAVE.



MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Language

PlayStation 2

DARKWORKS
VIDEO GAME DEVELOPMENT STUDIO

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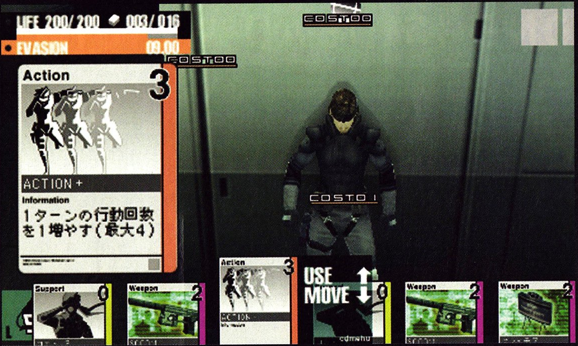
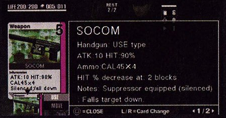


Information

1ターンの行動回数を1増やす(最大4)

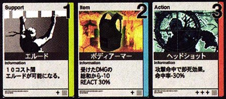


ATK:10 HIT:90%
CAL45×4
Silenced;fall down

SOCOM
Handgun: USE type
ATK:10 HIT:90%
Ammo:CAL45×4
HIT % decrease at: 2 blocks
Notes: Suppressor equipped (silenced)
: Falls target down.

○ =CLOSE L/R=Card Change ◂1/2▸

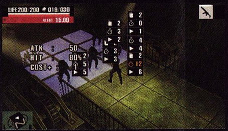
LIFE 200/200 017/030
ALERT 15.00

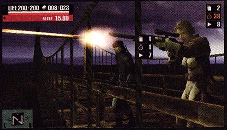


Information
10コスト間
エルードが可能になる。

Information
受けたDMGの
総和から-10
REACT 30%

Information
攻撃命中で即死効果。
命中率-30%





LIFE 200/200 223/244
QUICK
ALERT 15.00

MULTIPLE METAL
Playing mission nine unlocks the multiplayer mode. Do *not* skip past the story text, as it will explain the new rules that multiplayer follows. Otherwise, you'll be even more confused.

METAL GEAR ACID

What if you walked into a showing of *The Return of the King* and discovered that while it had all the elements of previous *Lord of the Rings* movies (epic action, close-ups of the ring, hobbits), it turned out to be a musical? A good musical, but still, a fundamentally different version of the previous formula. Well, that's kind of what's going on with *Metal Gear Acid* (minus the singing and dancing).

Yes, you watch "Solid Snake" (I'll leave it at that) sneak around a secret installation. Yes, you fight guards who express their surprise with a singular exclamation point. Yes, there are oddball villains (namely, two talking dolls who've managed to hijack an American airliner that also has a presidential candidate onboard). Yes, you fight a Metal Gear. Except you do all this through a turn-based card-game system. I know you've heard about this before, but I have to emphasize that *MGA* has everything you expect in a *Metal Gear* game, but it's turn based.

In every mission, you take a deck of 30 cards and use each one for an action, whether it is to employ a weapon or to simply move. These cards range from the traditional FAMAS rifle to special ones such as Metal Gear Rex (from the *MGS1* pack) or even Colonel Volgin (from *MGS3*). Some cards have obvious effects (Metal Gears, from all three games, pretty much deal heavy area damage), while others are more subtle and strategic (the Psycho Mantis card hypnotizes any enemy).

There is a significant amount of strategy in using these cards—for example, you can throw a grenade, but it doesn't detonate immediately. So if the enemy moves out of the way, you can use the SOCOM pistol card (which also has a knock-back effect) to push the enemy right onto the grenade. If you know the enemy soldiers have modified their rifles with all sorts of cool weapon-effect cards, you can pull out the Jehuty (from *Zone of the Enders 2*) card and use it to set everyone's weapons back to normal. Of course, this in turn reverts your modified weapon back to its original state, so you have to decide if you want to sacrifice your own cool modifications in order to destroy your enemies' mods. And I haven't even gotten to the strategy of using multiple characters in a single mission.

Generally, the turn-based action is very solid. Occasionally, the AI does some incredibly goofy things (I've had enemies spin around in circles during their turn, for example), and it's a bit annoying to have to use a card just to move. But then there are some great moments, such as coordinating a double assault on a boss or experiencing the odd sense of tension that comes with fighting a hulking Metal Gear in turns. And then there's the fact that *Metal Gear Acid* is the best-looking turn-based game I've ever played. Or that the story, involving secret labs and terrorist dolls, has some twists that are even more bizarre than the story in *MGS2*. (Of course, that may be a good thing or a bad thing, depending on your point of view.)

As solid as the turn-based gameplay is, I still have to warn you that your brain might fold in half as it comprehends how the game works. Which, come to think of it, is pretty much a standard occurrence with any *Metal Gear* game. « *Thierry Nguyen*

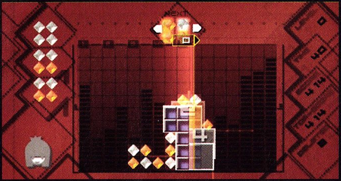
VERDICT A good—but completely different than what you're used to—entry into the *Metal Gear* universe.

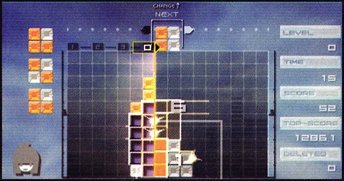
Pub. Konami **Dev.** Konami **ESRB** M **MSRP** $49.99

RATING ●●●●○

EVERYONE LOVES A BONUS

In the Title menu, you'll note that there's an option to enter passwords. How does one get passwords? Well, we used the handy Interweb, but for those of you who like to earn your cheats the honest way, try interrogating guards in *Metal Gear Solid 3*. (When they crack, they'll start giving you passwords.) And what exactly are these passwords good for? Some really cool bonus cards, that's what. In fact, we'll even give you one for free: Type in "JEHUTY." You're welcome.





LUMINES

A CIRCUS OF SIGHT AND SOUND

Puzzle games are often deceptive. On the surface, they may seem incredibly simplistic and straightforward, but these characteristics actually just serve as a ploy to suck you into a world of addiction. This is what *Lumines* does. It's a simple-looking PSP game—there aren't any crazy polygonal models or zany special effects like bump-mapping. No, it's just got colored blocks, some psychedelic backgrounds, and great music, and you'll find that they seamlessly blend together to create one of the best puzzle experiences in recent memory.

In fact, that is the essence of *Lumines*. You may initially have difficulty with the concept of trying to form blocks (as ridiculous as that sounds, it's true), but at a certain point, your mind literally gets into a rhythm and everything clicks. All of a sudden you start to feel the beat of the music and notice block patterns that you might have not recognized before, and the points just start pouring in. At the same time, you can really sense when you start to lose that rhythm if you place a block incorrectly and realize that there was a much better place for it. It's interesting how *Lumines* provokes these feelings, but then again, that's the whole point of the game, and it executes it very well.

Plus, there are just some inherently great traditional gaming aspects here as well. Multiplayer matches can become incredibly competitive, and there's always the incentive to get the highest score possible. When you hear someone mention getting a high score greater than yours, you immediately get an overwhelming urge to boot up your PSP to try to best it. Then there's the motivation to unlock as many of the crazy backgrounds as possible so that you can hone your skills on them.

The only real strike against the game is that there's no random setting for the backgrounds and music, so you might get tired of repeatedly hearing the same song (as good as they are) or seeing the same background over and over. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

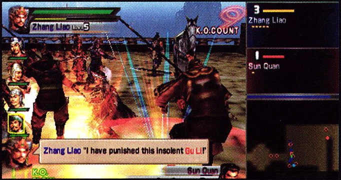
PROS Great music, puzzle mechanics, and competitive multiplayer
CONS Option for randomization of backgrounds and music would help

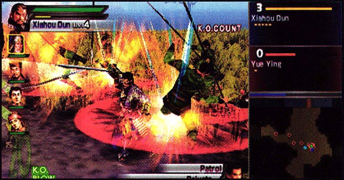
Pub. Ubisoft **Dev.** Q Entertainment **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING ●●●●○

MIZAWHOCHI?

Tetsuya Mizaguchi, the designer of *Lumines*, is the same fellow who created the cult-classic musical shooter *Rez*. We had a chance to chat with Mr. Mizaguchi this month—check out what he had to say about both games in our exclusive interview on page 55.





DYNASTY WARRIORS

SQUARE, SQUARE, SQUARE, TRIANGLE, SQUARE, SQUARE

It's utterly crazy that handheld technology has reached a point where a game like *Dynasty Warriors* is even remotely possible to do on a technical level. The PSP version of *Dynasty Warriors* successfully re-creates the insane battles and hack-n-slash mechanics of its console counterparts. That's no easy feat, to be sure, especially considering how much action is actually occurring onscreen. Also, by that same token, the controls are still supereasy to use—maneuvering your character and executing a variety of combinations are a piece of cake.

Yet for all the good qualities *Dynasty Warriors* shares with its console counterparts, it shares an equal number of flaws. The first problem is your fellow soldiers. They're generally about as smart as a tree stump and about as useful as one—they often just stand around and do nothing while enemies relentlessly whale on you with their swords and spears. Plus, there's a bit of an issue concerning knowing where to go or where to locate enemy soldiers. Part of the problem is that the actual gameplay area on the screen is pretty small, limiting your field of view to a very specific part of the action and the environment. Secondly, there's no real traditional map system to give you an idea of where groups of troops might be located, so you'll end up doing a fair share of mindless wandering around. Still, the action is solid, and fans of the series will definitely get a kick out of it. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS Solid and straightforward combat, lots of fighting to be had
CONS Lame AI and problems locating enemies

Pub. Koei **Dev.** Koei **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING ●●●○○

LEMONY SNICKET

(Jim Carrey, Emily Browning)

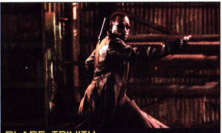
CREEPINESS SHOULD BE RELISHED by John Scalzi

I really wish I loved this film rather than merely sort of liked it, because it contains all sorts of things that I love on an individual basis. Dark, Gothic sets? Check! Clever children negotiating comic danger? Check! Jim Carrey, wild and uninhibited? Check, baby, check. It's like I stepped into my Gashlycrumb Tinies poster and got to stay awhile. Honestly, what's not to love?

And yet none of it fires on all cylinders, and I suspect this falls on director Brad Silberling, whose previous films (*Casper*, *City of Angels*, *Moonlight Mile*) show a high-functioning level of competence as a filmmaker. But a film like this doesn't need high competence; it needs inspiration and possibly insanity: Tim Burton, or at the very least Barry Sonnenfeld (the director of the *Addams Family* movies, who was originally attached to direct *Lemony*). Silberling knows what he should do, and he and the film do it, and you can't fault it: It hits its marks. It just doesn't do so with the delirious delight it should.

It falls to Carrey to add an extra boost to the proceedings, and I have to say I get a kick out of his unhingedness, even if it gets to be too much. The kids themselves do a fine job too, and in particular, I wish I were 14 again so I could have a proper crush on Emily Browning without feeling like a creaky creepie. And I like looking at the film. But the love is just not there, and that is, sad to say, an unfortunate event indeed.

RATING ○○○◐●



BLADE: TRINITY

(Wesley Snipes, Jessica Biel)

It would have been a little much to expect *Blade: Trinity* to be as good as *Blade II*, which for my money ranks as one of the best vampire films you'll see. But it should have been better than this mess, especially considering that this time, Blade squares off against Dracula, of all people. Oh well, at least you get eye candy in the form of (depending on your predilections) Jessica Biel and/or Ryan Reynolds, and Wesley Snipes is reliably badass. But I'd rather watch *Blade II* again.

RATING ●●○○○

ELEKTRA

(Jennifer Garner, Terence Stamp)

Do mainstream action films suck more now than they did in their previous nadir of competence, the '80s Stallone-Schwarzenegger-Norris era of unfathomable suckitude? I say yes, and *Elektra* is part of the poorly plotted, incoherently shot, comics-despoiling, PG-13-rated problem. To name but two of the ways it could have been great: Jennifer Garner—hot and reasonably talented. Source material—the great Frank Miller graphic novels. But it's mumbo jumbo-y mush: Garner does what she can, but the story makes no sense, and thanks to the mild rating, it can't provide the level of carnage required to make up for the lack of story. And so you're left with what we have here: lots of people moving about athletically but not making a lick of sense. On the other hand: no Ben Affleck. So that's good.

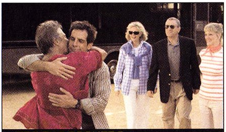
RATING ●●○○○

HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS

(Zhang Ziyi, Andy Lau)

If American action films are going through an era of monumental stench emanation, at least we can turn to Asia, where the genre continues to elevate itself visually and aesthetically. *Daggers*, like *Hero*, the previous action film by director Zhang Yimou, is almost unfathomably beautiful, choreographs its action with aching style, and isn't afraid to give its characters more than one measly dimension each. If American action directors don't feel humbled and shamed, they are too delusional to live.

RATING ●●●●●



MEET THE FOCKERS

(Ben Stiller, Robert De Niro)

Well, I hope you're all happy, since by seeing this movie in the theaters in stupid numbers—don't deny that you did, because a $275 million domestic gross doesn't happen by itself—you've sentenced us all (and more important, me) to a third Focker installment, in which, I do not doubt, there will be a baby and a bris. There's nothing about this film that justifies subjecting me to that. So why did you all make it a big hit? Did you really want to see Streisand on film again that much? Damn you!

RATING ●●●○○

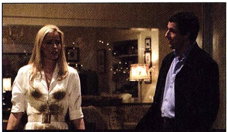
DVD RELEASES

April 5
Elektra
Sideways
Spanglish

April 12
Hotel Rwanda
Ocean's Twelve
Space Ghost Coast to Coast: Volume 3
The Woodsman

April 19
House of Flying Daggers
A Love Song for Bobby Long
Meet the Fockers
That '70s Show: Season 2

April 26
The Assassination of Richard Nixon
Blade: Trinity
Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events

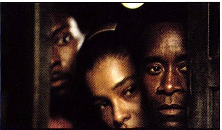


SPANGLISH

(Adam Sandler, Téa Leoni)

I now officially feel sorry for Adam Sandler, since with the financial failure of this reasonably erudite comedy, Sandler's fan base has made it clear that it will not bother to see him in any film in which he plays a character with a mental age of more than 15. On the other hand, should we expect the *Happy Gilmore* audience to follow Sandler to a film about relationships and human failings if there are not multiple groin kicks and farts? I think this qualifies as a genuine existential conundrum.

RATING ●●●○○

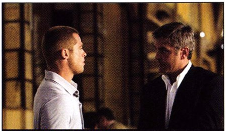


HOTEL RWANDA

(Don Cheadle, Sophie Okonedo)

I like the irony of people complaining that videogames are breeding killers when there are places like Rwanda, where in 1994 800,000 people were murdered in the space of a few weeks...with nary a game in sight. This film brings you that appalling situation, shown through the eyes of a hotel manager who through flattery and guile saves more than 1,000 people from being butchered. You need to see this; it's a reminder that what turns people into killers is hate, pure and simple.

RATING ●●●●◐

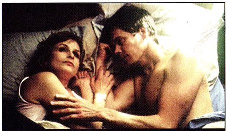


OCEAN'S TWELVE

(George Clooney, Brad Pitt)

The film's tagline is "Twelve is the new eleven," and they weren't kidding—if the "eleven" they're referring to is the original *Ocean's Eleven* starring the Rat Pack. That film was famously lazy and was predicated on the notion people would see it simply to see Frank and pals chum around. Likewise, *Twelve* relies far too heavily on the idea that the audience is already highly amused with Clooney, Pitt, and the rest even before the film starts rolling. Surprise! We're not!

RATING ●●●○○



THE WOODSMAN

(Kevin Bacon, Mos Def)

I'm pretty much of the opinion there's nothing wrong with child molesters that the flat end of a shovel and a vat of DNA-shattering industrial solvent wouldn't fix, so I wasn't particularly inclined to be sympathetic to the main character of this film, a paroled molester trying to stay out of trouble. That I ultimately was is a testament to a tremendous performance by Kevin Bacon and a story that doesn't make all the expected moves. It's an uncomfortable film, to be sure, but a good film nonetheless.

RATING ●●●●○

MATURE 17+

M

Blood
Strong Language
Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

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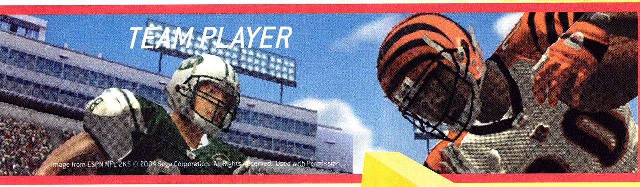

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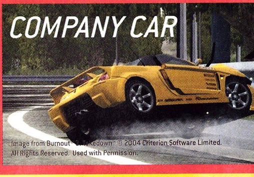

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LANCIA RACING
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REPLAY

124>

GT4

WE BRAKE FOR RACING!

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Prima Games, leading publisher of gaming guides, provides *OPM* with top-of-the-line strategies every month.

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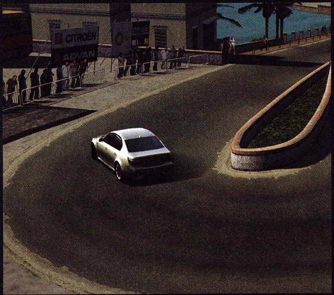
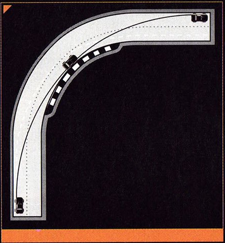
GT4: DRIVING

LEARN THE BASICS FOR GRAN TURISMO SUCCESS



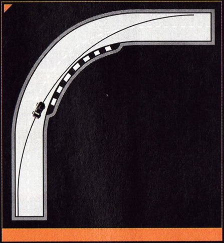
RACING LINES

A racing line is the actual path you take through a course. The reason it's called a line is because if you looked at a track map after a driver completed a lap, you would be able to see this imaginary path traced out as a line. The reason the line is so important is because there is both a correct and incorrect approach to racing lines. This section is designed to keep you away from the incorrect ones. Before we can even begin discussing the lines needed for different types of turns, we need to talk about some basic cornering terms and definitions.



APEX

The apex of a turn is the point in the road where the car comes closest to the inside edge of the track. The apex is not always in the same place for every type of car, turn, or even driver. It's important to remember that the apex is merely a reference point for discussion and that it breaks each turn into two parts. The first part (pre-apex) is called the turn entry, and the second part (post-apex) is called the turn exit.



INSIDE

When we refer to the inside of a turn, we're referring to the side closest to the apex. If you're making a right turn—as shown above—then the inside would be the side of the road farthest to the right. If you're making a left turn, then the inside would be the side of the road farthest to the left. When discussing the various strategies throughout the tracks, we'll use the terms "tight," "low," and "down" interchangeably with "inside."

TECHNIQUES

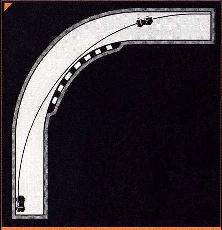
THE STARTING GRID

OFF THE LINE

Unlike most racing games, *Gran Turismo 4* doesn't require a full "brake torque" start with 100 percent throttle to ensure a solid launch. Depending on your car, you might actually be better off feathering the throttle, much like you would in a real car. Lower hp cars launch better with full revs before the flag goes down, whereas higher hp cars with gobs of torque tend to just smoke tires using the same technique. With that in mind, throttle modulation is key in the more powerful cars. Don't forget that the controls utilize the analog buttons, so you don't always have to be "on" or "off." Sometimes medium pressure works best.

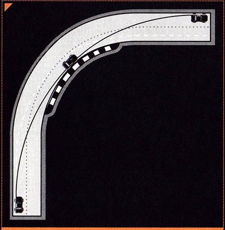
LAUNCHING TIPS

- For cars with high torque output, one of the best upgrades you can make use of to improve your launch is a gearbox with an adjustable ratio. Try making first gear lower, which will eliminate a good portion, if not all, of your wheelspin.
- Keep your suspension settings in line with your car's output level. If your car is putting out 200 hp, adjust your suspension with a milder tune, since you probably won't be making very many hard launches.
- Cars with an FR drivetrain have the best weight transfer for launching, but cars with 4WD have the best grip. If possible, try to make all FF and MR cars emulate the FR drivetrain by adjusting suspension settings to get more traction to the drive wheels.
- The tires you choose have a huge influence on how well your car launches out of the box. A softer tire will get you moving faster because its contact patch is larger than that of a harder racing tire.



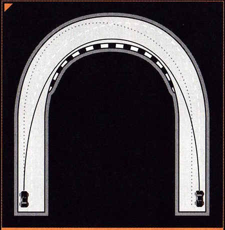
OUTSIDE

The outside of a turn is the part of the track farthest away from the apex and is always near the upper barrier or wall of the track. If you're carrying a little too much speed through a turn, you'll have a good chance of ending up on the outside of the corner. When discussing the various strategies throughout the tracks, we'll use the terms "edge," "high," and "wide" interchangeably with "outside."



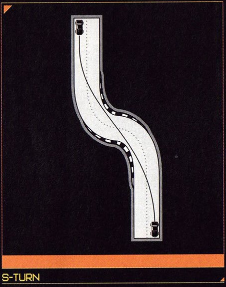
90-DEGREE TURNS

Looking at the diagram, you'll notice that the solid line represents the standard path for this turn and that the broken line represents the late apex. The solid line has the least amount of risk involved and creates an excellent balance between entry and exit speeds. The broken line shows the "fastest" arc for this type of corner, but it's also the easiest to screw up. Similarly, a late apex is OK for some situations, but it involves a higher entry speed and a slower exit speed, which is bad for straights. The only way for you to find out which is best for you is to run separate time trials using these methods.



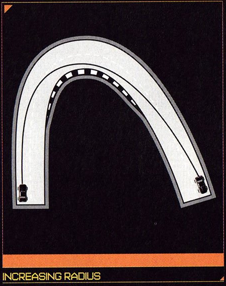
180-DEGREE TURNS

The solid line represents the standard arc through a hairpin turn, which is by far the easiest line to take. The dotted line shows an early apex, which is usually the most common, and worst, way to take a turn. The reason it's the worst is because you're spending way too much time turning and not carrying enough exit speed. The broken line shows the late apex, which—like on the 90-degree turn—is the fastest arc through the corner. The only problem with this path is the actual execution of getting through it, which comes from many hours of practice. Don't expect to just waltz right in and nail the late apex line on your first try—it takes time.



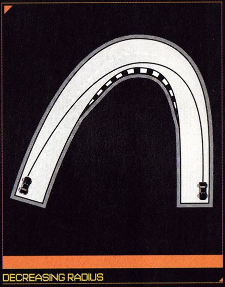
S-TURN

For S-turns, we found it best to almost always use the standard line. Your speed is constant, your arc is smooth, and your speed retention is high. The dotted line is the late apex, which, as in every other turn, works like a charm if you can nail it just right. Again, the main problem with this line is the fact that it's difficult to hit with many cars, and quite often the preceding turns make the path almost impossible to follow. Remember that you'll need to scout the track after the chicane and find out if it's worth carrying the extra speed through the turn or not.



INCREASING RADIUS

An increasing-radius turn starts off sharp but slowly becomes a bit wider until it finally straightens out into the next part of the course. The early apex works best here, since the wide angle allows for maximum speed retention with little risk in execution.



DECREASING RADIUS

Decreasing-radius turns begin rather wide but then slowly sharpen until they peak. Usually, this peak is a 90-degree turn, making the entry very difficult to navigate. Your best bet is an extremely late apex, holding your speed for a good majority of the turn before it gets sharp.

BRAKING METHODS

Realistically, braking is everything. This means that you should ignore everything that you're likely to hear from your buddies about acceleration, shifting, understeer, oversteer, throttle control, and even proper cornering techniques. Trust us—solid braking skills will be what separates the golds from the silvers and the occasional winners from the consistent champions.

NEVER BRAKE WHILE TURNING

Apply the brakes only when you're traveling straight—never, ever when you have your wheels turned. If you do try to brake with your wheels turned, you'll have a good chance of breaking the front tires loose and going into a 180-degree spin. The faster you go, the more likely it is your tires will break loose on a turn.

SLOW IN, FAST OUT

This phrase sums up the importance of maximizing your speed through the corners. The idea is to brake before you get to the corner and then accelerate through it once your car is past the apex.

POOR MAN'S ABS

A useful technique ever since the original *Gran Turismo* on PlayStation, poor man's ABS (PMABS) is the act of rapidly tapping your Brake button to achieve a simulated ABS system. In some cars, you'll drive better with the TCS turned off and your PMABS ready to go. PMABS is even less of an issue in *GT4* than it was in any of the previous games, but it still works in many situations.

EMERGENCY BRAKE

The emergency brake is best left untouched during standard road-course manipulation. The reason for leaving it alone is a simple one: It locks up all four wheels and induces a loss of car control. Loss of car control is bad. The best time to use the emergency brake—if ever—is when you're rally racing with a 4WD car and you're looking to pull off an insanely well-executed opposite lock.

(Note: An opposite lock is when your wheels are pointed in the absolute opposite direction that the car is sliding.)

THRESHOLD BRAKING

Threshold braking, quite simply, involves using 100 percent of a car's braking capability while braking in a straight line. You approach the threshold when your tire is rotating at approximately 15 percent of the speed it would be if it were just rotating freely. Any more pressure than this will lock up your car and cause it to skid. Remember that if you brake too hard for the speed you're traveling at, your front tires will become overloaded with pressure and break loose from the pavement no matter what you do. There is no way to stop this from happening, which is why proper braking techniques and experience come into play in this department.

TRAIL BRAKING

Just as some argue that straight-line braking is the single best method available, others say that trail braking, or the art of "decelerating while turning," is best. Trail braking is just what it sounds like—you're actually braking throughout the turn, sometimes even past the turn-in.

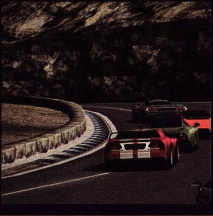
ENGINE BRAKING

With a manual transmission, the gearbox can be used to slow your car's speed by downshifting as you enter a turn. This is best used in cars that have insufficient racing brakes to take some of the load off the calipers and rotors.

MINIMIZING TIME AROUND THE TRACK

After looking at the last few definitions and diagrams, there are a couple more things we need to mention to help you make the most of the individual turn analysis.

- To minimize time on the straight parts of the course, use 100 percent throttle with zero braking while keeping your wheels absolutely straight. During a straight, each little twist of the front wheels adds time to your lap.
- To minimize time in the corners, exit with as much speed as possible. When cornering, the biggest radius yields the highest speed.
- The optimum line isn't always like the one pictured in our diagram. Our diagrams are merely theory. It takes both racing and gaming experience to find the best line for each type of car, turn, and environment. «



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PS2 TRICKS AND REVIEW ARCHIVE

Game names in black bars indicate a Greatest Hits title. Names in orange indicate a score of 5 out of 5. ⚡ indicates the game supports online play.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
.hack//INFECTION	Bandai	●●●◖	65
.hack//MUTATION	Bandai	●●●●	69
.hack//OUTBREAK	Bandai	●●●●	73
.hack//QUARANTINE	Bandai	●●●●	76
18 Wheeler American Pro Trucker	Acclaim	●●●●	52
4x4 EVO	GOD Games	●●●●	44
2002 FIFA World Cup	EA Sports	●●●●	58
Ace Combat 04: Shattered Skies	**Namco**	●●●●◖	**51**
Ace Combat 5: The Unsung War	Namco	●●●●	87
Activision Anthology	Activision	●●●●	64
Aero Elite: Combat Academy	Sega	●●●	67
The Adventures of Cookie & Cream	Agetec	●●●◖	44
Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	●●●●◖	59
Airblade	Namco	●●●●	53
Airforce Delta Strike	Konami	●●●	78
Alias	Acclaim	●●◖	81
Alien Hominid	0-3 Entertainment	●●●●	88
Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction	EA Games	●●●◖	72
All-Star Baseball 2002	Acclaim	●●●◖	44
All-Star Baseball 2003	Acclaim	●●●◖	56
All-Star Baseball 2004	Acclaim	●●●	67
⚡All-Star Baseball 2005	Acclaim	●●◖	80
Alter Echo	THQ	●●	73
American Idol	Codemasters	●	77
⚡Amplitude	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
Antz Extreme Racing	Empire	●◖	61
Ape Escape 2	Ubisoft	●●●●◖	70
Ape Escape: Primed & Pumped	Ubisoft	●●◖	88
Aqua Aqua	3DO	●●	42
Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits	Sony CEA	●●●●	70
Arctic Thunder	Midway	●	50
⚡Area 51	Midway	●●●●	90
Armored Core 2	Agetec	●●●	39
Armored Core 2: Another Age	Agetec	●●●◖	48
Armored Core 3	Agetec	●●●◖	61
Armored Core: Nexus	Agetec	●●	85
Army Men: Air Attack	3DO	●●●◖	44
Army Men: Green Rogue	3DO	●●	45
Army Men RTS	3DO	●●●●	56
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2	3DO	●●◖	45
Asterix & Obelix Kick Buttix	Atari	●●◖	85
Astro Boy	Sega	●●●	85
Atari Anthology	Atari	●●	89
Athens 2004	Sony CEA	●●◖	83
ATV Offroad Fury	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**42**
⚡ **ATV Offroad Fury 2**	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**64**
⚡ATV Offroad Fury 3	Sony CEA	●●●●	88
ATV Quad Power Racing 2	Acclaim	●●●●	66
⚡Auto Modellista	Capcom	●●◖	69
Backyard Baseball	Atari	●●◖	81
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home	Eidos	●●◖	75
Backyard Wrestling 2: There Goes the Neighborhood	Eidos	●◖	89
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	**Interplay**	●●●●◖	**52**
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	Interplay	●●●◖	77
Barbarian	Titus	●●	57
The Bard's Tale	Vivendi Universal	●●●●◖	86
Bass Strike Virtual Fishing Tournament	THQ	●◖	51
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	Ubisoft	●●	74
Batman: Vengeance	Ubisoft	●●●	51
Battle Assault 3	Bandai	●●◖	88
Battle Engine Aquila	Atari	●●●◖	65
Battlestar Galactica	Vivendi Universal	●●●	76
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	●●●●	75
Big Mutha Truckers	Empire	●●●	71
Bionicle: The Game	EA Games	●●◖	75
Black & Bruised	Majesco	●●●●	67

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Blade II	Activision	●●	62
Blood Omen 2	Eidos	●●●◖	57
BloodRayne	Majesco	●●●◖	63
BloodRayne 2	Majesco	●●●●◖	87
Blood Will Tell	Sega	●●●●	87
Bloody Roar 3	Activision	●●●◖	47
Bloody Roar 4	Konami	●	75
Blowout	Majesco	●●●	77
BMX XXX	Acclaim	●◖	65
Bombastic	Capcom	●●◖	72
Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	Capcom	●●●●	67
Britney's Dance Beat	THQ	●●●●	58
The Bouncer	Square EA	●●●	42
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds	Sierra/Fox	●●●◖	73
Bujingai: The Forsaken City	Bam	●●●●	82
Burnout	Acclaim	●●●●◖	52
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	●●●●	63
⚡**Burnout 3: Takedown**	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**85**
Butt-Ugly Martians: Zoom or Doom!	Crave	●●	73
Cabela's Big Game Hunter	**Activision**	●●◖	**67**
Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2005 Adv.	Activision	●●●	90
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts	**Activision**	●●◖	**76**
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2004 Season	Activision	●●◖	74
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2005 Season	Activision	●●●●◖	85
⚡Call of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	●●●●	89

Need a little help in your campaign? Use this code to unlock all the levels at the start of the game. You are now free to skip to any level you'd like.

ALL LEVELS At the Level Select screen, hold Up on controller two, then press Start, Select, Select, Square on controller one.

Capcom Fighting Evolution	Capcom	●◖	88
Capcom vs. SNK 2	Capcom	●●●●◖	51
Carmen Sandiego: The Secret of the Stolen Drums	Bam	●●◖	77
CART Fury	Midway	●	47
Casper: Spirit Dimensions	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	50
Castlevania: Lament of Innocence	Konami	●●●●	74
The Cat in the Hat	Vivendi Universal	●●	76
Catwoman	EA Games	●	84
⚡Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest	Sony Online	●●●●◖	78
⚡Champions: Return to Arms	Sony Online	●●●●◖	90
Chaos Legion	Capcom	●●●◖	70
⚡Chessmaster	Ubisoft	●●●◖	70
Choplifter: Crisis Shield	Xicat	●●●	69
ChoroQ	Atlus	●●●◖	86
City Crisis	Take-Two	●●●	48
Clock Tower 3	Capcom	●●●	68
Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers	Acclaim	●●●	83
Colin McRae Rally 3	**Codemasters**	●●●●●	**68**
Commandos 2: Men of Courage	Eidos	●●	62
Conflict: Desert Storm	**Gotham Games**	●◖	**63**
Conflict: Desert Storm II	Gotham Games	●●●	74
Conflict: Vietnam	Global Star	●●◖	86
Conflict Zone	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Contra: Shattered Soldier	Konami	●●●●◖	64
Corvette	Global Star	●●●◖	81
Cool Boarders 2001	Sony CEA	●●●●	46
Crash Bandicoot: The Wrath of Cortex	**Universal**	●●●◖	**51**
⚡Crash 'N' Burn	Eidos	●●	87
Crash Nitro Kart	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●◖	**76**
Crash Twinsanity	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	86
Crazy Taxi	**Acclaim**	●●●●	**46**
Crimson Sea 2	Koei	●●●◖	80
Crimson Tears	Capcom	●●●◖	83
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubisoft	●●	74
Culdcept	SNK	●●●◖	75
Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse	Metro3D	●◖	49
Dark Cloud	**Sony CEA**	●●●●◖	**46**
Dark Cloud 2	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**66**
Dark Summit	THQ	●●●◖	52
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	**Acclaim**	●●●◖	**50**
DDR Extreme	Konami	●●●●	85
DDRMAX	Konami	●●●●	63
DDRMAX 2	Konami	●●●●	74
Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore	Tecmo	●●●●◖	39

FORGOTTEN "GEM"
Remember *The Bouncer*? Square's roaming fighter was one of the first games to be shown on PS2 hardware. Everyone thought it looked amazing, and it did. Too bad so much of that graphical sheen turned out to be prerendered and not interactive at all.

OLD-SCHOOL NIRVANA
What do you get when you cross *Monopoly* with *Magic: The Gathering*? You get something like *Culdcept*, the quirky turn-based board/card game from SNK. It looks like a PS1 game, sure, but it's strangely compelling nonetheless.

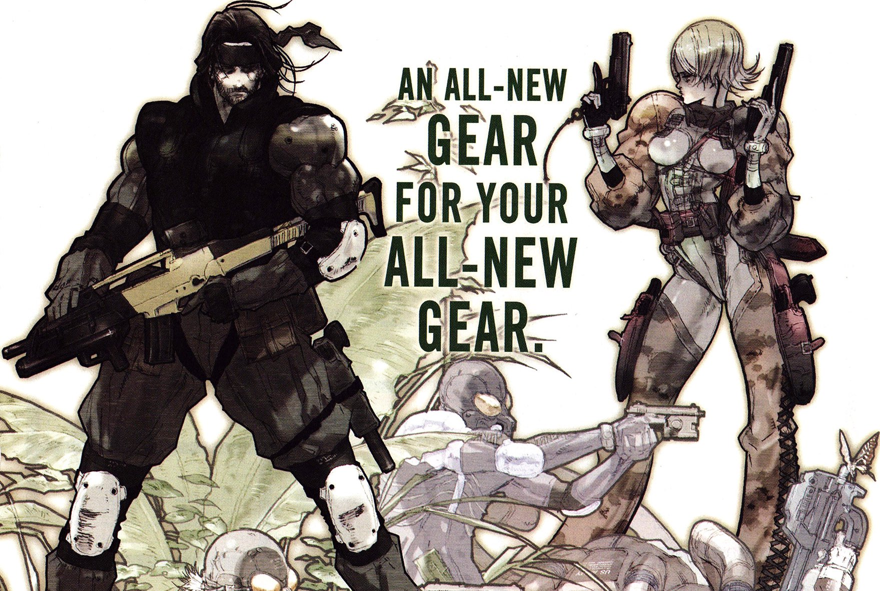
GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Dead to Rights	**Namco**	●●●	**65**
Death by Degrees	Namco	●◖	90
Def Jam Vendetta	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●	**67**
Def Jam Fight for NY	EA Games	●●●●◖	85

Want to play as your favorite rapper but don't have the heart to fight them in story mode in order to unlock them? Use the following codes to score yourself some reward points to unlock your favorites without violating your fan club membership.

To do this code, enter the password in the Cheat menu:

NEWJACK	100 reward points
THESOURCE	100 reward points
CROOKLYN	100 reward points

Defender	Midway	●●●◖	62
⚡Destruction Derby Arenas	Gathering	●●◖	80
Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	Eidos	●●●●◖	56
Devil May Cry	**Capcom**	●●●●●	**50**
Devil May Cry 2	**Capcom**	●●●	**66**
Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening	Capcom	●●●●◖	91
Digimon Rumble Arena 2	Bandai	●●●	88
Digital Hitz Factory	XS Games	●●●●	76
Dino Stalker	Capcom	●●●◖	61
Disaster Report	Agetec	●●●◖	65
Disgaea: Hour of Darkness	Atlus	●●●●	72
Disney Golf	EA Games	●●●●	61
Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure	Activision	●●●●	73
Disney's PK: Out of the Shadows	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Disney's Treasure Planet	Sony CEA	●●●◖	64
A Dog's Life	Hip Interactive	●●	84
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	Ubisoft	●●●◖	42
Downforce	Titus	●●	57
Downhill Domination	Sony CEA	●●●●	71
Dr. Muto	Midway	●●◖	63
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	**Atari**	●●●◖	**65**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	**Atari**	●●◖	**76**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3	Atari	●●●●	88
Dragon Rage	3DO	●◖	54
Drakan: The Ancients' Gates	Sony CEA	●●●●	53
Drakengard	Square Enix USA	●●	78
DRIV3R	Atari	●●●◖	83
Driven	Bam	●	52
Driving Emotion Type-S	Square EA	●●◖	41
Drome Racers	EA Games	●●◖	64
Dropship	Bam	●●●●	57
Dual Hearts	Atlus	●●●	61
Duel Masters	Atari	●●●	89
The Dukes of Hazzard: Return of the General Lee	Ubisoft	●●●◖	87
Dynasty Tactics	Koei	●●●●◖	61
Dynasty Tactics 2	Koei	●●●●	74
Dynasty Warriors 2	Koei	●●●●	38
Dynasty Warriors 3	Koei	●●●●	52
Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	65
Dynasty Warriors 4	Koei	●●●●◖	68
Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	75
Dynasty Warriors 4: Empires	**Koei**	●●●●	**85**
Ecco the Dolphin: Defender of the Future	Acclaim	●●◖	56
Echo Night: Beyond	Agetec	●●●	84
Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness	Kemco	●●◖	61
⚡eJay Clubworld	Crave	●●	73
Endgame	Empire	●●	59
Enter the Matrix	**Atari**	●●●	**71**
Ephemeral Fantasia	Konami	●◖	49
Escape From Monkey Island	**LucasArts**	●●●●●	**46**
⚡ESPN College Hoops	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	76
⚡ESPN College Hoops 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	88
ESPN International Track & Field	Konami	●●●	39
ESPN International Winter Sports 2002	Konami	●●●●	54
⚡ESPN Major League Baseball	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	80
ESPN MLS Extra Time	Konami	●●	44
ESPN National Hockey Night	Konami	●◖	45
ESPN NBA 2Night	Konami	●●	42
ESPN NBA 2Night 2002	Konami	●●●	56
⚡ESPN NBA 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●	87
⚡**ESPN NBA Basketball**	**ESPN Videogames**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡ESPN NFL Football	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	72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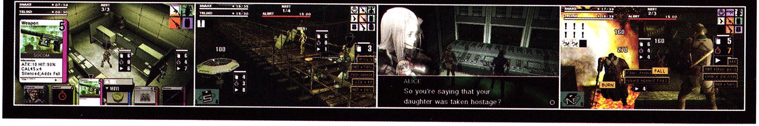
SNAKE
TELIKO
REST 3/3
Weapon
5
SOCOM
ATK:10 HIT:90%
CAL45×4
Silenced;Adds Fall
MOVE
REST 1/4
ALERT
100
REST 2/3
160
270
FALL
BURN

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GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
⚡ESPN NFL 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●	84
⚡ESPN NHL Hockey	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	73
⚡ESPN NHL 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	85
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding	Konami	●●●	41
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding 2002	Konami	●●●	53
ESPN X Games Skateboarding	Konami	●●●●	49
Eternal Ring	Agetec	●●	38
Eve of Extinction	Eidos	●●◖	56
Everblue 2	Capcom	●●●	66
Evergrace	Agetec	●●	39
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures	Sony Online	●●◖	66
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers	Sony Online	●●●◖	77
Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	THQ	●●●	70
Evil Twin	Ubisoft	●●	52
Evolution Skateboarding	Konami	●●◖	63
Evolution Snowboarding	Konami	●	65
Extermination	Sony CEA	●●◖	48
Extreme-G III	Acclaim	●●●●	50
EyeToy: AntiGrav	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
EyeToy: Groove	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	80
F1 2001	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**52**
F1 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	60
F1 Career Challenge	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**71**
F1 Championship	Ubisoft	●●●●	43
F1 Championship Season 2000	EA Sports	●●◖	41
Fairly OddParents: Shadow Showdown	THQ	●●●◖	88
Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel	Interplay	●●◖	78
Fantavision	Sony CEA	●●●●	40
Fatal Frame	Tecmo	●●●●	55
Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly	Tecmo	●●●●	77
Ferrari F355 Challenge	Sega	●●	61
FIFA 2001 Major League Soccer	EA Sports	●●●●◖	39
FIFA 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	51
FIFA Soccer 2003	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**63**
⚡FIFA Soccer 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡FIFA Soccer 2005	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**86**
⚡FIFA Street	EA Sports	●●◖	91
Fight Club	Vivendi Universal	●◖	87
⚡Fight Night 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●	**80**
⚡Fight Night Round 2	EA Sports	●●●●◖	91
Fighter Maker 2	Agetec	●◖	64
Final Fantasy X	**Square EA**	●●●●●	**53**
Final Fantasy X-2	**Square Enix USA**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡Final Fantasy XI	**Square Enix USA**	●●●●●	**78**
⚡Final Fantasy XI: Chains of Promathia	Square Enix USA	●●●●	87
Finding Nemo	**THQ**	●●●◖	**71**
Finny the Fish and the Seven Waters	Natsume	●●	91
Fireblade	Midway	●●◖	59
Fisherman's Challenge	Konami	●●	67
Ford Racing 2	Gotham Games	●●◖	76
Forever Kingdom	Agetec	●◖	53
Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone	Atari	●●●◖	86
Formula One 2001	Sony CEA	●●◖	50
Freaky Flyers	Midway	●●●◖	72
Freedom Fighters	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**73**
Freekstyle	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●	**59**
Freestyle Metal X	Midway	●●●	71
Frequency	Sony CEA	●●●◖	52
Frogger: The Great Quest	Konami	●◖	53
Frogger's Adventure: The Rescue	Konami	●●◖	76
Front Mission 4	Square Enix	●●●●	82
Fugitive Hunter	Encore	●	76
Fullmetal Alchemist	Square Enix	●●●	89
Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge	Acclaim	●●●	46
Futurama	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	72
Future Tactics: The Uprising	Crave	●●●◖	81
G1 Jockey 3	Koei	●●●◖	69
Gadget Racers	Conspiracy	●●●◖	50
Galactic Wrestling Featuring Ultimate Muscle	Bandai	●●◖	82
Galerians: Ash	Sammy	●◖	66
Gallop Racer	Tecmo	●●	48
Gallop Racer 2003: A New Breed	Tecmo	●●●	69
Gallop Racer 2004	Tecmo	●●●●	85
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy	Midway	●●●◖	46
The Getaway	Sony CEA	●●●●	66
The Getaway: Black Monday	Sony CEA	●●	89

DID YOU KNOW?

The indescribably awful *Gravity Games Bike: Street, Vert, Dirt* was the very first PS2 game ever to earn the coveted half-disc score in *OPM*. In case you're wondering, the first-ever half-disc PS1 game was the equally horrifying *The Fifth Element.*

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Get on da Mic	Eidos	●●	87
Ghosthunter	Namco	●●◖	84
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex	Bandai	●●	87
⚡Ghost Recon 2	Ubisoft	●●●	89
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay	●●●◖	51
Gitaroo-Man	Koei	●●●◖	53
Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance	Acclaim	●●	75
Gladius	LucasArts	●●●●	74
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde	Jaleco	●●◖	76
GoDai: Elemental Force	3DO	●◖	54
Godzilla: Save the Earth	Atari	●●◖	88
⚡GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	EA Games	●●●	89

Before there were bullets, people shot each other with paintballs. It's an almost-historical fact. The following codes allow you to turn back the clock with paintball mode and unlock all the multiplayer skins. Now you and your friends can reenact your favorite historical battles…sort of.

Enter these codes in the Extras menu:

PAINTBALL MODE Right, Left, Right, Left, Down, Down, Up, Up

UNLOCK ALL MULTIPLAYER SKINS Down, Left, Up, Left, Right, Down, Left, Up

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Gradius III and IV	Konami	●●◖	39
Gradius V	Konami	●●●◖	85
Gran Turismo 3: A-spec	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**46**
Gran Turismo 4	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**91**
Grand Prix Challenge	Atari	●●●◖	68
Grand Theft Auto III	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**52**
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**87**
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**63**
Grandia II	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Grandia Xtreme	Enix	●●●◖	62
Gravity Games Bike: Street, Vert, Dirt	Midway	◖	61
The Great Escape	Gotham Games	●●●◖	72
⚡Gretzky NHL 2005	Sony CEA	●●◖	88
⚡Growlanser Generations	Working Designs	●●●●	88
GTC Africa	Majesco	●●◖	58
Guilty Gear Isuka	Sammy	●●●●	86
Guilty Gear X	Majesco/Sammy	●●●●	51
Guilty Gear X2	Sammy	●●●●	66
Gungrave	Sega	●●●◖	61
Gungrave: Overdose	Mastiff	●●●◖	86
GunGriffon Blaze	Working Designs	●●●◖	39
The Guy Game	Gathering	●	85
Half-Life	**Sierra**	●●●●●	**51**
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	**EA Games**	●●●	**75**
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	EA Games	●◖	76
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	EA Games	●●●◖	64
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	EA Games	●●●●	82
Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland	Natsume	●●●●	51
Haunted Mansion	TDK	●●●	77
Haven: Call of the King	Midway	●●●◖	64
Headhunter	Acclaim	●●●	57
Headhunter: Redemption	Sega	●●●	86
Herdy Gerdy	Eidos	●●●	56
Heroes of Might and Magic	3DO	●●◖	46
Hidden Invasion	Conspiracy	●●●	60
High Heat MLB 2002	3DO	●●●●	44
High Heat MLB 2003	3DO	●●●●◖	55
High Heat MLB 2004	**3DO**	●●●●●	**67**
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	●●●●◖	81
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	**Eidos**	●●●●◖	**63**
The Hobbit	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	76
Hot Shots Golf 3	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**55**
⚡Hot Shots Golf Fore!	Sony CEA	●●●◖	85
⚡Hot Wheels: Stunt Track Challenge	THQ	●●●◖	89
Hot Wheels: Velocity X	THQ	●●◖	64
The Hulk	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●●	**70**
Hunter: The Reckoning–Wayward	Interplay	●●◖	72
Hypersonic Xtreme	Majesco	●●◖	67
I-Ninja	Namco	●●●◖	75
Ico	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**50**
The Incredibles	THQ	●●●◖	88
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts	●●●	71
Indy Car Series	Codemasters	●●●	71

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Intellivision Lives!	Crave	●●●◖	77
Inuyasha: The Secret of the Cursed Mask	Bandai	●	89
Island Extreme Stunts	EA Games	●●●◖	65
The Italian Job	Eidos	●●	72
Jade Cocoon 2	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**52**
Jak II	**Sony CEA**	●●●◖	**74**
Jak 3	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire	**EA Games**	●●●●	**52**
James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	EA Games	●●●●◖	79
James Bond 007: NightFire	**EA Games**	●●●●◖	**64**
James Cameron's Dark Angel	Sierra	●●	65
Jeopardy!	Atari	●●◖	77
Jeremy McGrath Supercross World	Acclaim	●	53
Jet X20	Sony CEA	●●	63
Jimmy Neutron: Attack of the Twonkies	THQ	●●●	88
Jonny Moseley Mad Trix	3DO	●◖	54
Judge Dredd: Dredd vs. Death	Evolved Games	●●◖	80
The Jungle Book: Rhythm n' Groove	Ubisoft	●●●	69
Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	Universal Int.	●●●●◖	68
K-1 World Grand Prix	Konami	●●	71
Karaoke Revolution	Konami	●●●●	75
Karaoke Revolution Volume 2	Konami	●●●●◖	83
Karaoke Revolution Volume 3	Konami	●●●●◖	87
Katamari Damacy	Namco	●●●●◖	86
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	Activision	●●●◖	61
Kengo: Master of Bushido	Crave	●●●	42
Kessen	EA Games	●●●	39
Kessen II	Koei	●●●	51
Kessen III	Koei	●●●	91
kill.switch	**Namco**	●●●●◖	**75**
⚡Killzone	Sony CEA	●●●●	87
Kinetica	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	50
King Arthur	Konami	●	88
King of Fighters 2000/2001	SNK Playmore	●●◖	76
King of Fighters 2002/2003	SNK Playmore	●●●●	88
King of Fighters: Maximum Impact	SNK Playmore	●●●	87
The King of Route 66	Sega	●●●	67
King's Field: The Ancient City	Agetec	●●	55
Kingdom Hearts	**Square EA**	●●●●◖	**61**
Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil	Namco	●●●●◖	47
Knockout Kings 2001	EA Sports	●●●●	42
Knockout Kings 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Kuon	Agetec	●●◖	87
Kya: Dark Lineage	Atari	●●◖	76
La Pucelle: Tactics	Mastiff	●●●●	81
Le Mans 24 Hours	Infogrames	●●◖	48
Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Eidos	●●◖	76
Legaia 2: Duel Saga	Fresh Games	●●●	63
The Legend of Alon D'ar	Ubisoft	●◖	54
Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●●◖	53
Legends of Wrestling II	Acclaim	●●●	65
Legion: The Legend of Excalibur	Midway	●●●	59
Lego Racers 2	Lego Media	●●◖	51
Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	87
Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events	Activision	●●	89
Lethal Skies	Sammy	●●●	58
Lethal Skies II	Sammy	●●●◖	74
Looney Tunes: Back in Action	EA Games	●	76
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Black Label	●●●◖	63
⚡The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**75**
The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age	EA Games	●●	88
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	**EA Games**	●●●●◖	**63**
Lowrider	Jaleco	●◖	77
Lupin the 3rd: Treasure of the Sorcerer King	Bandai	●●●◖	78
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	Vivendi Universal	●●	71
Mad Maestro!	Eidos/Fresh	●●●	56
Madden NFL 2001	EA Sports	●●●●◖	38
Madden NFL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	48
⚡Madden NFL 2003	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**60**
⚡Madden NFL 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**72**
⚡Madden NFL 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	83

For those of us who don't have a cheering section in our living rooms, the following cheats for *Madden 2005* will pump up the crowd and put cheerleaders on your sidelines. Unfortunately, these codes will not put cheerleaders in your living room.

STAR WARS™

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PROTECT THE REPUBLIC AND JOIN THE JEDI IN THEIR STRUGGLE AGAINST THE DARK SIDE. DEFEAT SEPARATIST ARMADAS, BLAST DROID ONSLAUGHTS AND STOP GENERAL GRIEVOUS ONCE AND FOR ALL . . .

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STAR WARS

5 EPIC GAMES BUILT-IN

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB Violence

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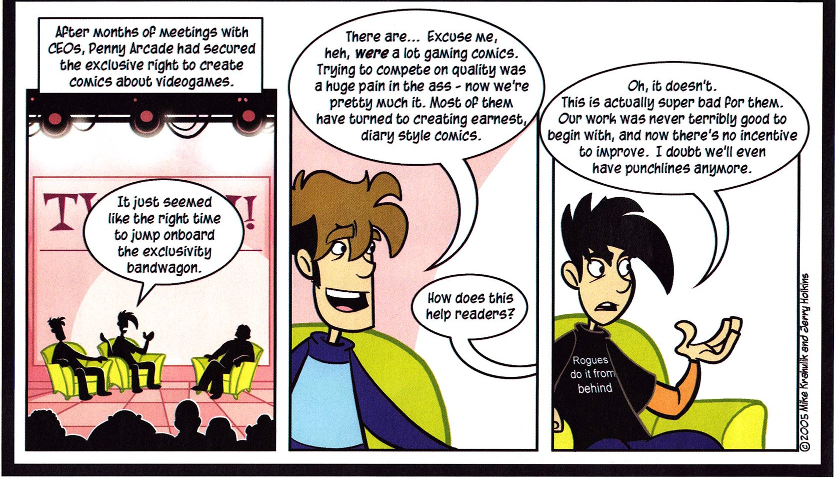

After months of meetings with CEOs, Penny Arcade had secured the exclusive right to create comics about videogames.
It just seemed like the right time to jump onboard the exclusivity bandwagon.
There are... Excuse me, heh, were a lot gaming comics. Trying to compete on quality was a huge pain in the ass - now we're pretty much it. Most of them have turned to creating earnest, diary style comics.
How does this help readers?
Oh, it doesn't. This is actually super bad for them. Our work was never terribly good to begin with, and now there's no incentive to improve. I doubt we'll even have punchlines anymore.
Rogues do it from behind
©2005 Mike Krahulik and Jerry Holkins

Enter these codes in My Madden under the Madden Codes:

SEAHAWKS CHEERLEADER	A35T8R
STEELERS PUMP UP CROWD	C98I2V
TEXANS CHEERLEADER	R74G3W
TITANS CHEERLEADER	Q81V4N
VIKINGS CHEERLEADER	E26H4L

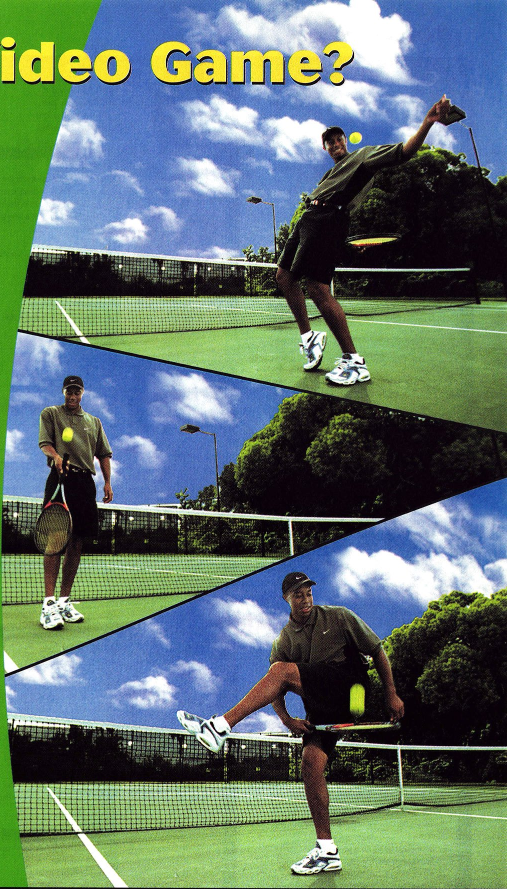
GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Mafia	Gathering	●●●◖	79
Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color	Agetec	●●●●	69
⚡Major League Baseball 2K5	2K Games	●●●●	91
Malice	Mud Duck	●●◖	84
Manhunt	**Rockstar**	●●●◖	**76**
The Mark of Kri	Sony CEA	●●●	59
Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Capcom	●●●●	61
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	Activision	●●●●	60
Max Payne	**Rockstar**	●●●●	**53**
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	Rockstar	●●●◖	77
Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	**Capcom**	●●●◖	**54**
Maximo vs. Army of Zin	Capcom	●●●●	77
McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Konami	◖	84
MDK2 Armageddon	Interplay	●●●◖	45
Medal of Honor: Frontline	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**58**
⚡Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	**EA Games**	●●●◖	**76**
Mega Man Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●●◖	83
Mega Man X: Command Mission	Capcom	●●●◖	86
Mega Man X7	Capcom	●●●◖	74
Mega Man X8	Capcom	●●●	88
Men in Black II: Alien Escape	Infogrames	●●◖	60
Mercenaries	LucasArts	●●●●◖	89
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	Vivendi Universal	●●●●	75
Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty	**Konami**	●●●●●	**51**
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	**Konami**	●●●●●	**67**
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	**Konami**	●●●●●	**88**
Metropolismania	Natsume	●●●	61
Midnight Club	**Rockstar**	●●●●	**39**
⚡Midnight Club II	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**67**
Midway Arcade Treasures	Midway	●●●◖	76
Midway Arcade Treasures 2	Midway	●●●●	87
Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing	Codemasters	●	58
Minority Report	Activision	●●◖	65
Mission: Impossible–Operation Surma	Atari	●●	77
Mister Mosquito	Eidos/Fresh	●●●◖	56
MLB 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	67
⚡MLB 2005	Sony CEA	●●●◖	80
⚡MLB 2006	Sony CEA	●●●◖	91
MLB SlugFest 20-03	Midway	●●●●	59
MLB SlugFest 20-04	Midway	●●●●	67
⚡MLB SlugFest: Loaded	Midway	●●●◖	83
Mobile Light Force 2	XS Games	●●●◖	69
Mobile Suit Gundam: Encounters in Space	Bandai	●	75
Mobile Suit Gundam: Federation vs. Zeon	Bandai	●●●◖	61
Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Jaburo	Bandai	●	48
Mobile Suit Gundam: Zeonic Front	Bandai	●●●	54
Mojo!	Crave	●●◖	73
Monopoly Party	Infogrames	●●●	65
Monster 4x4: Masters of Metal	Ubisoft	●●◖	77
Monster Hunter	Capcom	●●●●	86
Monster Rancher 3	Tecmo	●●●●	50
Monster Rancher 4	Tecmo	●●●◖	75
Monsters, Inc.	Sony CEA	●●●◖	55
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	**Midway**	●●●●	**64**
⚡Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	●●●●	87
MotoGP	Namco	●●●●	39
MotoGP 2	Namco	●●●●◖	53
MotoGP 3	Namco	●●●●◖	67
Motor Mayhem	Infogrames	●●●	47
MTV Music Generator 2	Codemasters	●●●	46
MTV Music Generator 3: This Is the Remix	Codemasters	●●●◖	82
MTV's Celebrity Deathmatch	Gotham Games	●◖	76
⚡MTX: Mototrax	Activision	●●◖	80
The Mummy Returns	Universal	●◖	52
Musashi Samurai Legend	Square Enix	●●●	91
Music Maker	Magix	●●●●	69
MVP Baseball 2003	EA Sports	●●●◖	67
⚡MVP Baseball 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	80
⚡MVP Baseball 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	91
MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	●●●●	47
MX Rider	Infogrames	●●●◖	52
MX Superfly Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	●●●◖	59
⚡MX vs. ATV Unleashed	THQ	●●●●	91
⚡My Street	Sony CEA	●●●	67
Myst III: Exile	Ubisoft	●●●◖	63
Mystic Heroes	Koei	●●◖	64
MX Unleashed	**THQ**	●●●	**79**
Namco Museum	**Namco**	●●●◖	**53**
Nano Breaker	Konami	●●◖	90
NASCAR 2001	EA Sports	●●◖	40
⚡NASCAR 2005: Chase for the Cup	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**85**
NASCAR Heat	Infogrames	●●●●	47
NASCAR Thunder 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	51
NASCAR Thunder 2003	EA Sports	●●●●◖	62
⚡NASCAR Thunder 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**73**
NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona	Infogrames	●●●◖	63
Naval Ops: Warship Gunner	Koei	●●●	71
NBA 2K2	**Sega Sports**	●●●●●	**53**
⚡NBA 2K3	**Sega Sports**	●●●●●	**63**
NBA Ballers	Midway Sports	●●●●	80
NBA Hoopz	Midway	●●●	44
NBA Jam 2004	Acclaim	●●◖	75

KRI-ATION

Think we underrated *The Mark of Kri*? Check out the review of its sequel, *Rise of the Kasai*, on page 88. Remember to write your own reviews any time you disagree with ours. Send 'em to opm@ziffdavis.com with the subject "Reader Reviews."

Buying a Video Game?

Play the game that's right for you!



You can give Tiger Woods a tennis racket, but he knows that golf is the game that's right for him. So how does Tiger know which computer and video games are OK to play? He checks the rating on every game box...And so should you!

Computer and video game ratings have two parts: **rating symbols**, which tell you what age group the game is appropriate for and **content descriptors**, which tell you about specific content elements that may be of interest or concern.

So the next time you're choosing a game, check the rating and the content descriptors. And like Tiger Woods, play the game that's right for you.

ESRB

ENTERTAINMENT
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CHECK THE RATINGS ON EVERY VIDEO GAME BOX

ON FRONT

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EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

→

VIDEO GAME
E

←

ON BACK

EVERYONE E
Comic Mischief
Mild Lyrics
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
NBA Live 2001	EA Sports	●●●	42
NBA Live 2002	EA Sports	●●◖	51
⚡NBA Live 2003	EA Sports	●●●●	63
⚡NBA Live 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	75
⚡NBA Live 2005	EA Sports	●●●●	86

It's not how you play, but how you look on the court. Use the following code inputs to outfit your baller in the nicest shoes and gear the hardwood has to offer.

Enter these codes in the NBA Lounge Code menu:

ALL SHOES	FHM389HU80
ALL TEAM GEAR	1NVDR89ER2
NIKE AIR HUARACHE 2K4	VNBA60230T
NIKE BG ROLLOUT	0984ADF90P
NIKE SHOX ELITE	2388HDFCBJ

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
NBA ShootOut 2001	Sony CEA	●●◖	44
NBA ShootOut 2003	Sony CEA	●●●	63
⚡NBA ShootOut 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	75
NBA Starting Five	Konami	●●◖	63
NBA Street	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●●	**47**
NBA Street Vol. 2	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●●	**68**
⚡NBA Street V3	EA Sports Big	●●●●◖	90
⚡NCAA College Basketball 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●	64
NCAA College Football 2K3	Sega Sports	●●◖	60
NCAA Final Four 2001	Sony CEA	●	41
NCAA Final Four 2002	Sony CEA	●◖	52
NCAA Final Four 2003	Sony CEA	●●◖	64
⚡NCAA Final Four 2004	Sony CEA	●●	76
NCAA Football 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	48
NCAA Football 2003	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**60**
⚡**NCAA Football 2004**	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**71**
⚡NCAA Football 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	83
NCAA GameBreaker 2001	Sony CEA	●◖	41
NCAA GameBreaker 2003	Sony CEA	●●	61
⚡NCAA GameBreaker 2004	Sony CEA	●●◖	73
NCAA March Madness 2002	EA Sports	●●●	53
NCAA March Madness 2003	EA Sports	●●●	64
⚡NCAA March Madness 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	76
⚡NCAA March Madness 2005	EA Sports	●●●◖	88
Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**62**
⚡**Need for Speed Underground**	**EA Games**	●●●●◖	**76**
⚡**Need for Speed Underground 2**	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**87**

Spend all your money on a nice ride but now lack the funds and goodies to pimp it out? These codes will get a little cash in your pocket, unlock a Hummer H2, and grant you some performance parts and vinyls. Happy racing!

Enter these codes at the Title screen:

$1,000 IN CAREER MODE AND RX-8 AND SKYLINE IN QUICK RACE
Left, Left, Right, Square, Square, Right, L1, R1
$200 IN CAREER MODE
Up, Up, Up, Left, R1, R1, R1, Down
BURGER KING VINYL
Up, Up, Up, Up, Down, Up, Up, Left
UNLOCKS A HUMMER H2 CAPONE
Up, Left, Up, Up, Down, Left, Down, Left
UNLOCKS THE BEST BUY CAR VINYL
Up, Down, Up, Down, Down, Up, Right, Left

Enter these codes at the Start screen:

UNLOCK PERFORMANCE LEVEL 1
L1, R1, L1, R1, Left, Left, Right, Up
UNLOCK PERFORMANCE LEVEL 2
R1, R1, L1, R1, Left, Right, Up, Down
UNLOCK VISUAL LEVEL 1
R1, R1, Up, Down, L1, L1, Up, Down
UNLOCK VISUAL LEVEL 2
L1, R1, Up, Down, L1, Up, Up, Down

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Neo Contra	Konami	●●●◖	87
NFL 2K2	**Sega Sports**	●●●◖	**52**
⚡NFL 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●◖	60
NFL Blitz 20-02	Midway	●●●●	55
NFL Blitz 20-03	Midway	●●●◖	60
⚡NFL Blitz Pro	Midway Sports	●●●	74

THE END OF THE "N"
Now that EA has pwn3d the NFL, expect to see fewer games here in the "N" section. Instead, keep an eye out for games like *Blitz: The League*, which will revel in the newfound freedom that arises from not having to play by the NFL's rules anymore.

INSTANT CLASSIC
Though *Psi-Ops'* story sucked ass, the gameplay itself was absolutely brilliant. If you haven't checked it out, you need to learn the pleasures of hurling your enemies through the air with the power of your mind. We're still hoping for a sequel sometime.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
NFL GameDay 2001	Sony CEA	●	40
NFL GameDay 2002	Sony CEA	●◖	53
⚡NFL GameDay 2003	Sony CEA	●●◖	61
⚡NFL GameDay 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	73
NFL Quarterback Club 2001	Acclaim	●●◖	50
⚡**NFL Street**	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●◖	**78**
⚡NFL Street 2	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	89

The NFL hits the streets for the second time, and once again we demand the right to cheat. It just wouldn't be street ball if the rules weren't bent a little. Use the following codes to unlock AFC all-star teams and add a little stick 'em to the hands of your receivers.

Enter these codes in the Cheats menu:

AFC EAST ALL-STARS	EAASFSCT
AFC NORTH ALL-STARS	NAOFRCTH
AFC SOUTH ALL-STARS	SAOFUCTH
AFC WEST ALL-STARS	WAEFSCT
MAXED-OUT CATCHING STAT	MagnetHands

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
NHL 2001	EA Sports	●●●●	38
NHL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	50
NHL 2003	EA Sports	●●●◖	63
⚡NHL 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	73
⚡NHL 2005	EA Sports	●●●◖	85
NHL 2K3	**Sega Sports**	●●●●●	**64**
NHL FaceOff 2001	Sony CEA	●●●◖	43
NHL FaceOff 2003	Sony CEA	●●	64
NHL Hitz 20-02	Midway	●●●●	51
NHL Hitz 20-03	Midway	●●●●◖	62
⚡NHL Hitz Pro	Midway	●●●●	73
Nick Toons: Movin'	THQ	●●●	88
Nightmare of Druaga	Namco	●●	87
Ninja Assault	Namco	●●◖	61
No One Lives Forever	Sierra	●●●◖	56
Okage: Shadow King	Sony CEA	●●●	51
Oni	Rockstar	●◖	43
Onimusha: Warlords	**Capcom**	●●●●	**43**
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	**Capcom**	●●●●	**60**
Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	Capcom	●●●●◖	81
Orphen: Scion of Sorcery	Activision	●●●	39
⚡Outlaw Golf 2	Global Star	●◖	88
Pac-Man Fever	Namco	●●	60
Pac-Man World 2	**Namco**	●●●●◖	**54**
PaRappa the Rapper 2	Sony CEA	●●●◖	53
Paris-Dakar Rally	Acclaim	●●	53
Phantom Brave	NIS America	●●●●◖	85
Pinball Hall of Fame	Crave	●◖	90
Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat	EA Games	●●●◖	55
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	Activision	●●	80
Playboy: The Mansion	Arush Ent.	●●	91
The Polar Express	THQ	●●●	88
Pool Paradise	Ignition	●●●◖	83
Portal Runner	3DO	●●	50
Power Drome	Mud Duck	●	84
Power Rangers: Dino Thunder	THQ	●●	88
The Powerpuff Girls: Relish Rampage	Bam	●●	65
Pride FC	THQ	●●●●	65
Primal	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	**Ubisoft**	●●●●●	**75**
Prince of Persia: Warrior Within	Ubisoft	●●●●	88
Pro Race Driver	Codemasters	●●●●◖	65
Project Eden	Eidos	●●●◖	52
⚡Project: Snowblind	Eidos	●●●●	91
Pryzm Chapter One: The Dark Unicorn	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	60
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	●●●●◖	82
P.T.O. IV	Koei	●●●	66
The Punisher	THQ	●●●◖	90

To get the following code to work, you'll have to wear a skull T-shirt and a leather jacket. Entering the code unlocks all of the extra goodies in *The Punisher*, from comic-book covers to all weapons cheats.

EVERYTHING UNLOCKED (EXCEPT UPGRADES)
Enter "V Pirate" as a profile name.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Q-Ball Billiards Master	Take-Two	●●●◖	40
Quake III: Revolution	EA Games	●●●●◖	44
R: Racing Evolution	Namco	●●●●	76
R-Type Final	Eidos/Fresh Games	●●●●	78
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	Activision	●●●	64
Rapala Pro Fishing	Activision	●●◖	85
Ratchet & Clank	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**63**
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**75**
⚡**Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal**	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**87**
Rayman 2: Revolution	**Ubisoft**	●●●●●	**41**
Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubisoft	●●●◖	67
Rayman Arena	Ubisoft	●●●◖	57
RC Revenge Pro	Acclaim	●●◖	41
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing Round 2	Midway	●●●●	40
Real Pool	Infogrames	●●●◖	40
Red Card Soccer 20-03	Midway	●●●	57
Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar	●●●●	82
Red Faction	**THQ**	●●●●●	**46**
Red Faction II	THQ	●●●●	63
Reel Fishing III	Natsume	●●●●	72
Reign of Fire	Bam	●●●◖	63
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	**Capcom**	●●●●◖	**48**
Resident Evil: Dead Aim	Capcom	●●●◖	70
Resident Evil Outbreak	Capcom	●●●◖	81
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: OR	Activision	●●●◖	71
Rez	Sega	●●●●◖	53
Ribbit King	Bandai	●●●	82
Ridge Racer V	Namco	●●●●◖	38
Riding Spirits	Bam	●●●◖	61
Ring of Red	Konami	●●●●	43
Rise to Honor	**Sony CEA**	●●●	**78**
⚡Risk: Global Domination	Atari	●●●●	73
RLH: Run Like Hell	Interplay	●●●	62
Road Kill	Midway	●●●●	74
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Rune: Viking Warlord	Take-Two	●●◖	48
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Samurai Warriors: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●	88
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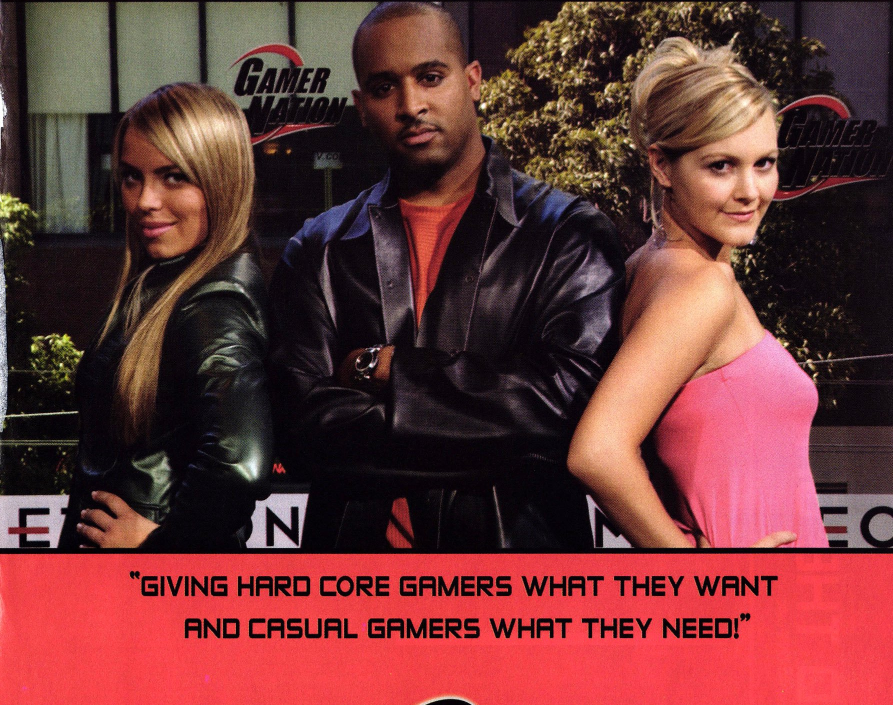
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BEHIND THE GAME: RIDGE RACER

THE STORY BEHIND THE PLAYSTATION'S ORIGINAL RACING GAME

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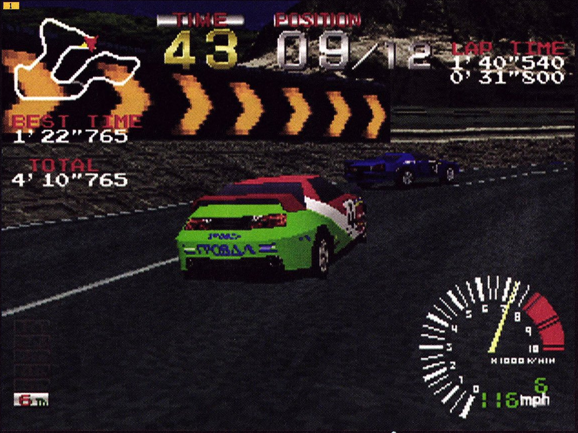

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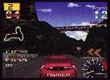

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TITLE TIMELINE

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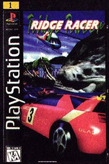

2

RIDGE RACER REVOLUTION
PlayStation
namco

3

RR
PlayStation
namco

4

R4
RIDGE RACER TYPE 4
PlayStation
namco

Back in the mid-'90s there was a war going on at the local arcade. Ever since the advent of fully 3D games, Japanese juggernauts Sega and Namco had been trading blows in both the fighting and racing arenas—*Virtua Fighter* versus *Tekken*, *Daytona USA* versus *Ridge Racer*. And as Sega readied to unleash its new Saturn console on the world in 1995, it would have to contend with Namco on a new battleground—the home market.

SONY VS. SEGA

Sony knew it'd need a strong lineup of arcade conversions if its PlayStation was to compete with Sega's Saturn. So who better to turn to for a launch game than Sega's old arcade rival? When the PlayStation hit the United States in 1995, Sony sent a message that it was ready to bury Sega by including a copy of Namco's superb *Ridge Racer* right in the box.

While it's debatable which home conversion played better—Saturn's *Daytona USA* or PlayStation's *Ridge Racer*—there's no denying that *Ridge Racer* was far and away the better looking of the two, driving home Sony's point right from the start: PlayStation was the place to go for beautiful 3D games.

Namco proved to be one of the most prolific developers for Sony's steadily growing PlayStation platform, releasing the follow-up, *Ridge Racer Revolution*, the next year. This game only marginally improved on the original, though, mostly focusing on supporting Sony's new system-link setup for multiplayer games.

EVOLUTION

In fact, only two years after the PlayStation's launch, the *Ridge Racer* series was already in jeopardy of becoming stale, as home gamers were demanding more depth from their driving games than straight arcade ports could offer. This was thanks in no small part to the avalanche of hype surrounding Sony's upcoming driving opus *Gran Turismo*. Why race with the same cars over and over again on the same three piddly tracks when you could build a garage of your own custom hot rods and compete for cash and cars in a multitude of different series? And so *Rage Racer* was born.

As the name suggests, *Rage Racer* was a major departure from the standard *Ridge Racer* formula. Gone were the small selection of cars and single-race events. They were replaced with a meatier tournament mode, in which the player would compete in numerous races in order to earn money and a shot at a higher division. You could then use this money to upgrade your cars, resulting in better performance and tricked-out modifications like spoilers, wide-body kits, and the like. Finally, you could fully customize everything, from the color of each car to the name on the windshield and the logo on the hood. It was also the first game in the series to include Namco's trademark CG intro cinematic, complete with an original *Rage Racer* song.

It was almost two years and one racing revolution—named *Gran Turismo*—before the *Ridge Racer* series would return to the PlayStation. *R4: Ridge Racer Type 4* took the series in yet another direction by offering various story lines for the player to follow. You

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ESSO Ultraflo
CALSONIC
NISMO

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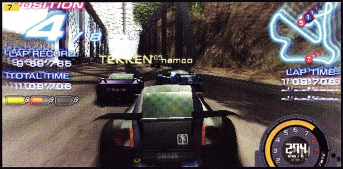

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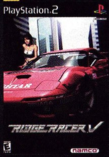

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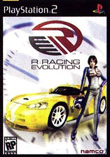

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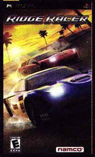


could join one of four racing teams to take to the championship, all the while learning strange, mostly useless information about your team's owner. Gone were most of the customization aspects found in *Rage Racer*, although the new, shiny graphics and DualShock controller support would mostly make up for it.

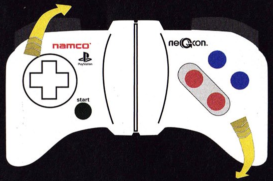
A NEW TRADITION

As Sony prepared for its second home console launch in 2000, Namco was right there with yet another *Ridge Racer* game to go along with it. *Ridge Racer V* was a throwback to *Rage Racer* in regard to the game's flow and customization options, but more importantly, it was one of the first games to show off the PlayStation 2's potential. And with the promised *Gran Turismo* update nowhere to be seen, *Ridge Racer V* was the best place for couch-potato speed demons to get their adrenaline rush.

After a four-year hiatus, the series has returned to once again help launch a PlayStation platform—Sony's handheld PSP. As usual, *Ridge Racer* is the earliest indication of just what the little system is capable of, with gorgeous graphics and pounding techno beats.

Launching a new system with a flagship title is nothing new, but in Sony's case, packing in the original PS1 *Ridge Racer* was unique if only because said flagship title was the product of a third-party publisher. The fact that Sony and Namco have teamed up thusly three times in a row now is unprecedented, but for the sake of racing fans everywhere, we hope the tradition continues with the PlayStation 3. « *Greg Sewart*

FAST CURVES
Ai Fukami (pictured above) replaced popular *Ridge Racer* mascot Reiko Nagase for *Ridge Racer V*, causing an outcry amongst gamers who had somehow forgotten that the girls they see in videogames aren't actually real people.



DID YOU KNOW?

TRIVIA ABOUT NAMCO'S SIGNATURE SERIES

NOT RIDGE RELATED
R: Racing Evolution (2003) was widely regarded as the latest sequel in the *Ridge Racer* franchise before it was released. Whether this misconception was thanks to confusing marketing or simply confused gaming press is hard to say, but Namco was quick to point out upon *Racing Evolution*'s release that the game was not, in fact, related to the *Ridge Racer* series.

CONTROL WITH A TWIST
Since *Ridge Racer* came out far too early to take advantage of Sony's analog controller, Namco took matters into its own hands and released the NeGcon controller in Japan. This freaky little number included analog buttons and a pivot in the center that you twisted in order to steer your car. It was like night and day when you used the NeGcon rather than Sony's stock digital pad to careen around the roads of Ridge City.

NOW LOADING
As you loaded a track in the original *Ridge Racer*, you got to play a quick round of Namco's classic arcade shooter *Galaga*. Not only was this a nice little bonus, but destroying every creature before the race finished loading would actually unlock bonus cars.

REAL RACING ROOTS
Ridge Racer started as an arcade game in 1993. It was quickly followed by *Ridge Racer 2* in 1994 and *Rave Racer* in 1995. What most people don't know is that the *Ridge Racer* series actually made a quiet return to arcades back in 2001, when Namco released a stripped-down version of *Ridge Racer V* that ran on PlayStation 2–based arcade hardware.

PLAYING WITH POWER
Ridge Racer isn't exclusive to the PlayStation. The series has shown up twice on Nintendo hardware. Namco released *Ridge Racer 64* on the N64 (natch) in 2000, while *Ridge Racer DS* was one of the launch games on the recently released Nintendo DS portable system. Both games were decent enough but never really matched the impact the series has made on Sony's hardware.

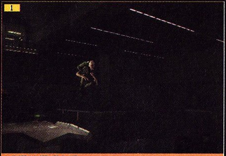
RACING EVOLUTION
When *R4* was released in 1999, it came bundled with a bonus disc entitled *Ridge Racer Turbo*. On this disc were videos of various other Namco games, a playable demo of the original *Ridge Racer*, and a remake of the original *Ridge Racer* that ran at a solid 60 frames per second. The demo was the result of an experiment the *Ridge Racer* team had tried for *R4*'s development; rather than let it go to waste, they gave it to the fans as a pretty sweet bonus.

AREA 51

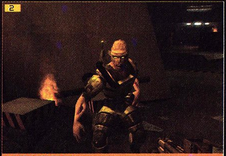
MULTIPLAYER STRATEGIES FROM THE FOLKS WHO KNOW BEST

__Area 51's online play__ is so fast and furious that it can prove rather daunting to the newcomer. With that in mind, we hit up the folks at Midway's Austin studios to give us some pointers. Here's what they had to say:

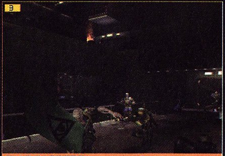
One of the main goals we had when designing *Area 51*'s multiplayer portion was to focus on the elements we could use from the single-player game to help differentiate us from other multiplayer titles. From a player's perspective, the advantage of having the two very unique play styles (human and mutant) was the first thing that got us excited. We looked at how these two characters were implemented in the campaign mode and began to tweak and tune how they should impact multiplayer.



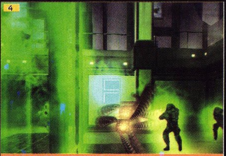
1 MUTANT JUMP



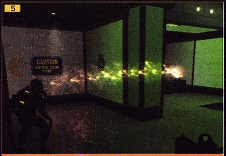
2 MUTANT RUN



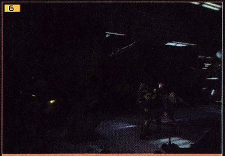
3 FLAG CARRIERS



4 PARASITE ATTACKS



5 CONTAGION ATTACKS



6 MELEE ATTACKS

MUTANT

LET YOUR LEGS DO THE WALKING AND YOUR CLAWS DO THE TALKING

The first thing we wanted to exploit with the mutant was his overall foot speed. Players will notice a dramatic difference in how fast the multiplayer mutant moves. This opens up a number of different strategies when mutated:

1 **Mutants jump** farther than their human counterparts. This makes navigation in some levels much faster. One example of where a mutant's speed could be used to gain an advantage is in the map Rift. There's a broken bridge in the middle of the map that mutants can leap across with a well-timed jump. Humans, on the other hand, must take a more precarious route.

2 **Mutants can run** much faster "pickup circuits." What this means essentially is that a mutated player can use his speed advantage to bound from pickup to pickup and gain more weapons, ammo, health, etc. than human players in the same amount of time.

3 **Mutants are the best flag carriers**. In CTF games, it's a smart move to keep a reserve of mutation power, not only to rush an opponent's base to grab a flag, but also to make a hasty departure.

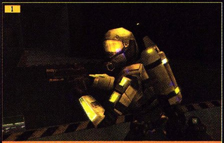
The speed is good, but what about the mutant attacks? We took a long look at the three campaign attacks and massaged them to be valid multiplayer offerings.

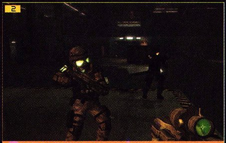
4 **Parasite attacks** were adjusted to do less overall damage since their inherent tracking behavior made them extremely deadly in multiplayer matches. They still retain the ability to transfer health back to the mutant and are thus a useful tool for wounded players.

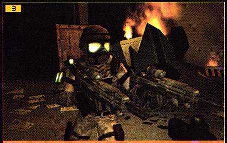
5 **Contagion attacks** were a trickier issue since they switch an NPC's faction in the single-player game. To keep the same flavor, the contagion attack in multiplayer actually causes its target to view all surrounding players as enemies, with the side effect of doing damage over time. Employing this attack is a great way to confuse opponents when you're trying to either infiltrate an enemy base or launch an assault on a capture point.

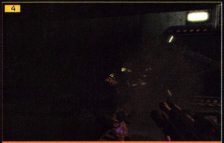
6 **Melee attacks combined** with the mutant's superior speed are a devastating combo since it only takes a few swipes to turn an opponent into a lifeless, twitching pile on the floor.

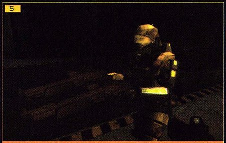
Besides the points mentioned above, mutating also allows the player to see the life "aura" surrounding other players, making them easy targets in the darkest of areas. In team-play modes, the aura is color-coded red or green, which really helps to cut down on the friendly fire.

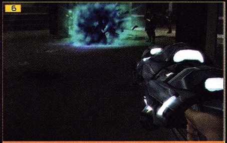

1 M11 "SCORPION" PISTOL

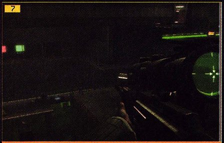

2 XM-32 "VIPER" SMG

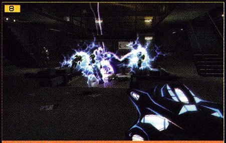

3 DUAL XM-32 "VIPER" SMGs

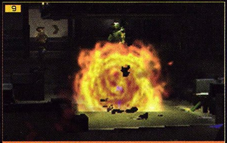

4 M170 "HAMMER" SHOTGUN

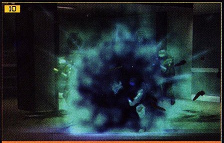

5 DUAL M170s

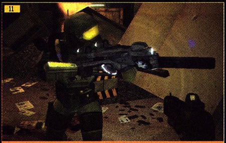

6 BBG

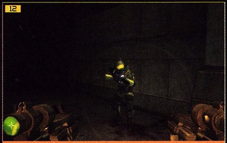

7 SR-125 "WRAITH" SNIPER RIFLE


8 MESON CANNON


9 FRAG GRENADE


10 JB GRENADE


11 WEAPON MELEE ATTACKS


12 WEAPON LIGHTS

HAZMAT
UNIT
U.S. ARMY

HUMAN

WALK TALL AND CARRY A BIG BOOMSTICK

After reading about some of the mutant abilities, players might have the impression that being human is the lesser experience. This is far from the truth, as the human player has access to a large assortment of very handy hardware. While mutant players will want to get up close and personal with their targets, human players can use any of the eight ranged weapons to make sure that doesn't happen.

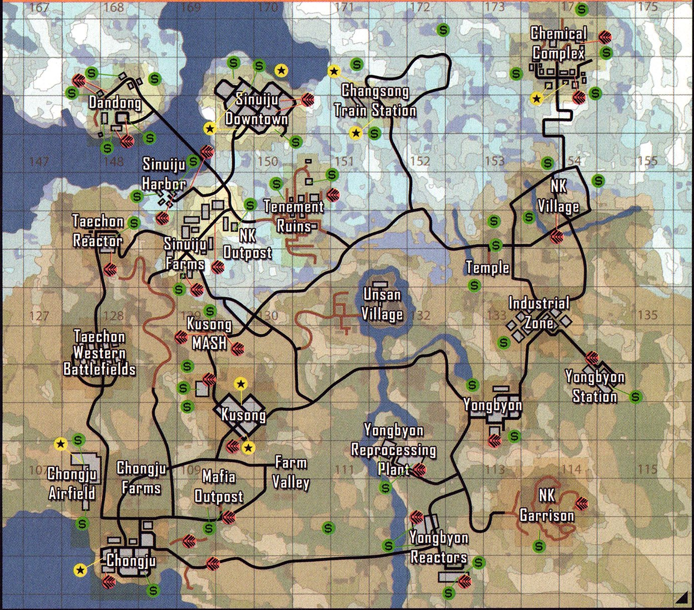
Let's take a look at some of the instruments of destruction available to human players:

1 M11 "Scorpion" pistol: This is no ordinary peashooter. It packs a punch and can be fired at nearly automatic speed.
2 XM-32 "Viper" SMG: The Viper has the highest ammo capacity of any weapon in the game and can be considered the human's bread-and-butter weapon. Firing in bursts is optimal, as sustained fire will cause the wielder's aim to degrade.
3 Dual XM-32 "Viper" SMGs: This setup can be the ultimate in spray-and-pray blasting since it puts forth an amazing amount of sustained damage, but the kick on the weapon makes aiming difficult.
4 M170 "Hammer" shotgun: This dual-barreled automatic room sweeper can quickly drop targets that have ventured a tad too close to the player. Primary fire alternates between barrels, while its secondary function delivers an often-fatal dose of double buckshot.
5 Dual M170 "Hammer" shotguns: As if two barrels weren't enough, dual Hammers pump out so much damage that it's advisable to make a quick retreat if you ever find yourself on the wrong end of their sights.
6 BBG: This is one of the most damaging weapons on a per-round basis, though its slower projectile sometimes makes landing hits difficult. Shots also have a limited amount of ricochets, and players can use the built-in targeting laser to help set up bounce shots. It's a fantastic weapon for ferreting out campers who are behind cover or laying down suppressive fire from a safe position
7 SR-125 "Wraith" sniper rifle: This large-caliber rifle actually has a relatively rapid rate of fire. It does extreme damage while zoomed in but loses a lot of punch when the scope is not used.
8 Meson cannon: The one-shot big boy on the block, this weapon of alien origin can clear out entire rooms. It's extremely effective at eradicating defenders in the opponent's base, but the user has to be wary of how close he is to the point of impact when firing.
9 Frag grenade: This standard grenade has a relatively short cook-off timer and does good damage. It also detonates on contact with any player.
10 JB grenade: This alien weapon has a longer cook off than your standard frag grenade but it does more damage with a larger overall burst.
11 Weapon melee attacks: All melee hits do a sizable amount of damage and can be chained with a successful hit.
12 Weapon lights: Most of the guns have combat flashlights, which are helpful for finding campers or hidden pickups. «

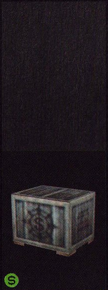
MERCENARIES

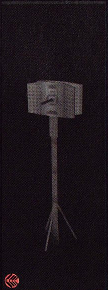
GETTING THE GOOD STUFF, PART II

NORTH LOCATIONS


Dandong
Sinuiju Downtown
Changsong Train Station
Chemical Complex
Sinuiju Harbor
Tenement Ruins
Taechon Reactor
NK Outpost
Sinuiju Farms
NK Village
Temple
Unsan Village
Industrial Zone
Kusong MASH
Taechon Western Battlefields
Yongbyon Station
Yongbyon
Kusong
Yongbyon Reprocessing Plant
Chongju Airfield
Chongju Farms
Farm Valley
Mafia Outpost
NK Garrison
Yongbyon Reactors
Chongju

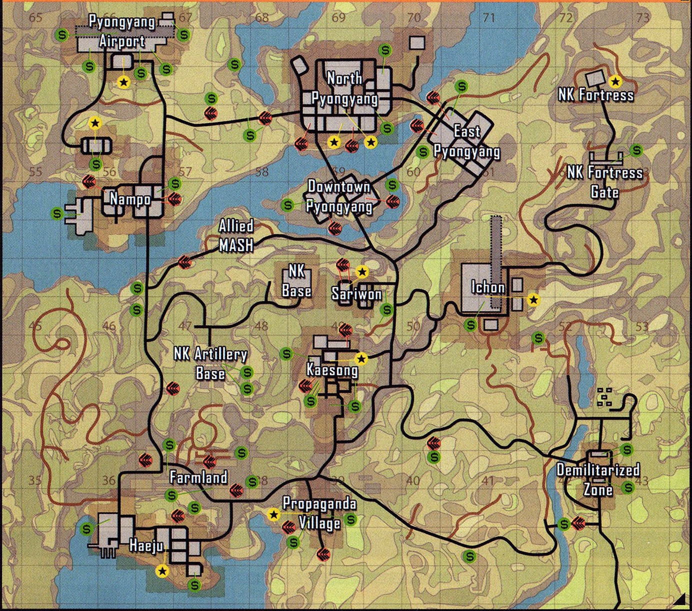
Looking to amass a vast fortune in cash, alternate characters, and other *Mercenaries* goodies? We've got the goods on more bounties this month. Bounties are items and objects placed about the game that you either collect or destroy to earn extra cash and an increase in faction mood. You can also unlock a variety of extra goodies if you collect or destroy enough bounties.


NATIONAL TREASURE


LISTENING POST

MONUMENT

SOUTH LOCATIONS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Pyongyang Airport
North Pyongyang
East Pyongyang
NK Fortress
NK Fortress Gate
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Nampo
Downtown Pyongyang
Allied MASH
NK Base
Sariwon
Ichon
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53
NK Artillery Base
Kaesong
Farmland
Demilitarized Zone
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Propaganda Village
Haeju

REWARDS

NATIONAL TREASURE REWARDS

National treasures are a common type of bounty item. They're scattered throughout North Korea. Collecting national treasures earns you some cash and improves China's mood toward you. To collect a national treasure, simply move into contact with it.

Here's what you get for collecting national treasures:

1	Chinese BJ2020 Scout Delivery
5	Civilian H3 Delivery
10	Chinese Fuel Truck Delivery
15	Cash: $50,000
20	Cheat: Play as Indiana Jones
30	Cheat: Play as Civilian Doctor
40	Cheat: Play as Civilian Prisoner
50	Cheat: Play as Ace of Diamonds
60	Cash: $100,000
70	Cash: $100,000
80	Cash: $250,000
90	Cash: $250,000
100	Cash: $500,000
110	Cheat: Play as SKU Elite Soldier

LISTENING POSTS REWARDS

SKU listening posts are a fairly common bounty object. They've been placed in strategic locations throughout North Korea by the South Korean Union. Destroying them earns you cash and improves China's mood toward you. They're easily destroyed—some small-arms fire does the trick.

Here's what you get for destroying SKU listening posts:

10	All Health Crate Supply Drop
20	Civilian Baggage Carrier Delivery
30	Mafia MD-530 Scout Delivery
40	Cheat: Play as NK Numeric Card (Hearts)
50	Cheat: Play as AN Pilot
55	Cash: $250,000

MONUMENT REWARDS

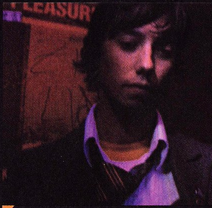
Monuments are the rarest bounty objects. They look like tall statues and have been erected in cities throughout North Korea. Destroying monuments earns you some cash and improves the South Korean Union's mood toward you. Monuments are sturdy, so use a C4 charge to destroy them.

Here's what you get for destroying monuments:

10	North Korean ZSU 57 Antiair Delivery
20	Cash: $250,000

THE SPORTS GUY

PSP: NO MORE FOR EYE CONTACT!



TODD ZUNIGA
is a former *OPM* staffer turned freelance writer. If you have a question about sports games, want a prediction, or just disagree, e-mail him at thesportsguy@ziffdavis.com.

Ahh, PSP sports games. To mimic the title of Mos Def's latest album, these handheld treats are, in fact, "the new danger." For ages I've said great sports games are priceless, in part because of what I refer to as their "infinity model." Like snowflakes, no two games are ever the same. The scoreboard may match up, but pitch selection, play calling, and the game's defining moments are never repeated.

With that in mind, the PSP's launch and its nine sports titles will mark a great many changes in our society. Some good, some bad.

THE GOOD More commuting! With the hole in the ozone becoming bigger than Barry Bonds' growing skull, smart types will dodge the 45-minute gridlock and take the 58-minute train trek, all to get two games closer to the pennant race in *MVP Baseball*.

THE BAD Less eye contact. Playing games on the PSP means paying less attention to commuting strangers because you're maxing out your *NBA Street Showdown* time—fewer chance encounters, more workday flirting. My advice: Buy Match.com stock.

THE SUPERBAD The death of literacy. When Tobias Wolff is passed over because it's Champions League time in *FIFA Soccer*, it marks a very pathetic—yet somehow excusable—period in man's history.

THE BOTH GOOD AND BAD Fewer iPod muggings! NYC's mugging contingent has taken aim at the white-headphoned as of late. The PSP's black headphone situation will lead to a rash of PSP muggings and a loss of your *Tiger Woods PGA Tour* progress. Ahh, criminals, such an adaptive bunch!

THE VERY BEST Random urban profanity! While walking down the street, you'll no longer see some jabber-jaw chitchatting with the skyline because he's using a headset with his cell phone. Now he'll be facedown, screaming at his PSP because Mike Modano fired wide in *Gretzky NHL*....

NOW HE'LL BE FACEDOWN, SCREAMING AT HIS PSP....

NOW ON TO MY FAVORITE SPORT Kudos to *MVP 2005* for recognizing that steroids are been there, done that. In a simulated season, only one hitter topped the 40-dinger mark, and that was Manny Ramirez, the game's cover athlete. It's a shame that *MVP 2005*, clear of its ugly *Triple Play* days, won't be back in 2006. Thanks to the NFL, the great overhyped product, for screwing up everything.... Is there anyone more reprehensible than attention whore Jose Canseco? His book is filled with half-truths for the purpose of hype, his tan is faker than his smile, and he shows off his true schmuckdom by appearing, as himself, in *Playboy: The Mansion*.

NOW IT'S FRIVOLOUS PREDICTION TIME, DURING WHICH I RANDOMLY PICK WINNERS The Yankees will win the World Series because of Randy Johnson. The Cubs will make the playoffs because of Carlos Zambrano. The Indians and Braves will win their divisions because of Kevin Millwood and Tim Hudson. Matt Clement will win 15 games for the Red Sox. The Sixers will win their division with C-Webb, the Heat will win the East, and the lame-o Spurs will win the NBA championship. And the NHL will win an all-new lack of fan support. «

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Shadow of Destiny	Konami	●●●◖	43
Shadow of Rome	Capcom	●●●●	89
Shadow Man: 2econd Coming	Acclaim	●●	57
Shaman King: Power of Spirit	Konami	●●◖	89
Shark Tale	Activision	●●◖	88
Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder	Activision	●●◖	52
ShellShock: Nam '67	Eidos	●●	85
Shifters	3DO	●	58
Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne	Atlus	●●●●◖	86
Shining Tears	Sega	●●●	90
Shinobi	Sega	●●●◖	63
Showdown: Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●◖	83
Shox	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	63
Shrek 2	Activision	●●●◖	82
Shrek Super Party	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	64
Siren	Sony CEA	●●●	81
Silent Hill 2	**Konami**	**●●●●◖**	**50**
Silent Hill 3	Konami	●●●●◖	71
Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	●●●●◖	85
Silent Line: Armored Core	Agetec	●●●◖	70
Silent Scope	Konami	●●●	39
Silent Scope 2	Konami	●●●◖	49
Silent Scope 3	Konami	●●●◖	62
Silpheed: The Lost Planet	Working Designs	●●●◖	40
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	Vivendi Universal	●●●●	72
The Simpsons: Road Rage	**EA Games**	**●●●**	**52**
The Simpsons Skateboarding	EA Games	●◖	64
The Sims	EA Games	●●●●	65
⚡The Sims: Bustin' Out	EA Games	●●●●◖	76
Sitting Ducks	Hip Interactive	●●●	88
Sky Gunner	Atlus	●●●◖	58
Sky Odyssey	Activision	●●●	40

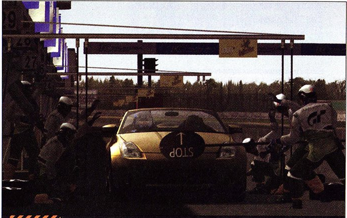
CONTRABAND CLASSIC
We're still waiting for Rockstar to trot out another *Smuggler's Run* sequel. The first game holds up as an undeniably entertaining arcade-driving experience. Surprisingly (for a launch game), the graphics hold up, too.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Sled Storm	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	55
Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**62**
Sly 2: Band of Thieves	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**86**
Smash Cars	Metro3D	●●●◖	71
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament	Namco	●●●◖	56
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament 2	Namco	●●●●	82
Smuggler's Run	**Rockstar**	**●●●●◖**	**39**
Smuggler's Run 2: Hostile Territory	Rockstar	●●●●◖	52
Soccer America: International Cup	Hot-B	●●	48
Soccer Mania	EA/Lego	●●●◖	59
⚡SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**60**
⚡SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**75**
Soldier of Fortune	Majesco	●●●	52
Sonic Heroes	Sega	●●	77
Sonic Mega Collection	Sega	●●●	88
Soul Calibur II	**Namco**	**●●●●●**	**72**
Soul Reaver 2	Eidos	●●●	52
Space Channel 5 Special Edition	Sega	●●●◖	75
Space Race	Infogrames	●●◖	59
Spawn Armageddon	Namco	●◖	76
Speed Kings	Acclaim	●●●●	70
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy	THQ	●●●◖	75
Spider-Man	**Activision**	**●●●●◖**	**57**
Spider-Man 2	Activision	●●●◖	84
Splashdown	Infogrames	●●●●	52
Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild	**THQ**	**●●●●●**	**72**
SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom	THQ	●●●●◖	75
SpongeBob SquarePants: The Movie	THQ	●●●●◖	87
Spy Fiction	Sammy	●●	85
SpyHunter	**Midway**	**●●●●◖**	**50**
SpyHunter 2	Midway	●●●	76
Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	**Vivendi Universal**	**●●●**	**64**

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Spyro: A Hero's Tail	Vivendi Universal	●●	87
⚡SRS: Street Racing Syndicate	Namco	●●●	64
SSX	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**38**
SSX Tricky	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**52**
⚡SSX 3	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**74**
Star Ocean: Till the End of Time	Square Enix	●●●●	84
Star Trek: Shattered Universe	TDK	●●	75
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	Majesco	●●◖	53
Star Wars Battlefront	LucasArts	●●●●◖	86
Star Wars Bounty Hunter	**LucasArts**	**●●●**	**64**
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	●●●	65
Star Wars Super Bombad Racing	LucasArts	●●	45
Star Wars Jedi Starfighter	LucasArts	●●●◖	56
Star Wars Racer Revenge	LucasArts	●●●●◖	55
Star Wars Starfighter	**LucasArts**	**●●●●◖**	**43**
Starsky & Hutch	Gotham Games	●●	74
State of Emergency	**Rockstar**	**●●●**	**55**
Stitch: Experiment 626	Sony CEA	●●◖	59
Street Fighter Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●●●	84
Street Fighter EX 3	Capcom	●●●◖	39
Street Hoops	**Activision**	**●●●◖**	**60**
Stretch Panic	Conspiracy	●●●◖	47
Strike Force Bowling	Crave	●◖	82
Stuntman	**Infogrames/Atari**	**●●●**	**59**
Sub Rebellion	Metro3D	●●●●	62
The Suffering	Midway	●●●	80
Suikoden III	Konami	●●●	63
Suikoden IV	Konami	●●●	89
Summer Heat Beach Volleyball	Acclaim	●●●◖	72
Summoner	THQ	●●●	39
Summoner 2	THQ	●●●◖	62
Sunny Garcia Surfing	Ubisoft	●●●◖	51

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Super Bust-A-Move	Acclaim	●●●	41
Super Bust-A-Move 2	Ubisoft	●●●◖	63
Super Trucks Racing	XS Games	●◖	76
Supercar Street Challenge	Activision	●●◖	52
Superman: Shadow of Apokolips	Atari	●●●◖	63
Surfing H30	Rockstar	●●	40
SWAT: Global Strike Team	Sierra	●●●	74
Swing Away Golf	EA Games	●●●	38
⚡Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	Sony CEA	●●●	81
Taiko: Drum Master	Namco	●●●●	87
Tak and the Power of Juju	**THQ**	●●●◖	**75**
Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams	THQ	●●●◖	88
Tarzan: Untamed	Ubisoft	●●●◖	52
Taz: Wanted	Infogrames	●●●◖	60
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Konami	●●◖	75
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	●	86
Tekken 4	**Namco**	●●●◖	**61**
Tekken Tag Tournament	**Namco**	●●●●◖	**39**
Technic Beat	Mastiff	●●●	89
Tenchu: Fatal Shadows	Sega	●●	90
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Activision	●●●	67
The Terminator: Dawn of Fate	Atari	●●◖	63
Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	Atari	●◖	77
Terminator 3: The Redemption	Atari	●●●◖	86
Test Drive	**Infogrames**	●●●◖	**58**
Test Drive Off-Road: Wide Open	Infogrames	●●●	48
Test Drive: Eve of Destruction	Atari	●●●●	85
Tetris Worlds	THQ	●●	57
Theme Park Roller Coaster	EA Games	●●●●	41
The Thing	Universal	●●●	62
Thunderstrike: Operation Phoenix	Eidos	●◖	52
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001	EA Sports	●●●	44
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	EA Sports	●●●●◖	63
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**73**
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	86
Time Crisis 2	Namco	●●●●	49
Time Crisis 3	Namco	●●●●◖	74
Time Crisis: Crisis Zone	Namco	●●●◖	86
TimeSplitters	**Eidos**	●●●●●	**39**
TimeSplitters 2	**Eidos**	●●●●●	**63**
⚡TimeSplitters: Future Perfect	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**91**
TOCA Race Driver 2	Codemasters	●●●●	86
Tokyo Xtreme Racer 3	Crave	●●	76
Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero	Crave	●●◖	45
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft	●●●◖	65
⚡Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	**Ubisoft**	●●●◖	**78**
⚡Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft	●●●●	80
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Ubisoft	●●●●◖	68
⚡Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	**Ubisoft**	●●●●●	**82**
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	**Eidos**	●●	**72**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	**Activision**	●●●●●	**51**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	**Activision**	●●●●●	**63**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground	**Activision**	●●●●●	**76**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground 2	Activision	●●●●◖	87
Top Angler	Xicat	●●●◖	57
Top Gear Dare Devil	Kemco	●●●◖	41
Top Gun: Combat Zones	Titus	●●●	50
Total Immersion Racing	Empire	●	66
Transformers	Atari	●●●◖	81
Transworld Surf	Infogrames	●●●◖	57
⚡Tribes: Aerial Assault	Sierra	●●●◖	62
Triple Play 2002	EA Sports	●●	55
Triple Play Baseball	EA Sports	●●	45
⚡Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Atari	●●	81
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	**Activision**	●●	**76**
Tsugunai: Atonement	Atlus	●●●	53
Turok: Evolution	Acclaim	●◖	62
Twisted Metal: Black	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**47**
⚡Twisted Metal: Black Online	Sony CEA	●●●●	61
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	EA Games	●●●	62
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger 2: Bush Rescue	EA Games	●●●●	88
UEFA Euro 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	82
UFC Throwdown	Crave	●●●◖	58
UFC Sudden Impact	Crave	●●●◖	82
Under the Skin	Capcom	●●●◖	86

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Unison	Tecmo	●●●◖	44
Unlimited Saga	Square Enix	●●	70
Unreal Tournament	Infogrames	●●◖	40
The Urbz: Sims in the City	EA Games	●●●◖	88
V-Rally 3	Infogrames	●●●●◖	64
Vampire Night	Namco	●●◖	52
Van Helsing	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	82
Vexx	Acclaim	●●	67
Victorious Boxers	Empire	●●●◖	51
⚡Vietcong: Purple Haze	Global Star	●◖	88
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	●●●●◖	85
Viewtiful Joe 2	Capcom	●●●●	88
Virtua Fighter 4	**Sega**	●●●●●	**55**
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	**Sega**	●●●●●	**72**
Virtua Quest	Sega	●●	89
Virtual on Marz	Sega	●●	76
Wakeboarding Unleashed	Activision	●●●●◖	70
Wallace & Gromit in Project Zoo	Bam	●●●	74
War Jetz	3DO	●●◖	48
War of the Monsters	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**64**
⚡Warhammer 40,000: Fire Warrior	THQ	●●◖	74
Warriors of Might and Magic	3DO	●●◖	44
Wave Rally	Eidos	●◖	53
Way of the Samurai	Bam	●●●◖	59
Way of the Samurai 2	Capcom	●●●	82
Wheel of Fortune	Atari	●●◖	76
Whiplash	Eidos	●●●◖	76
Whirl Tour	Vivendi Universal	●●	63
Whiteout	Konami	●	65
Wild Arms 3	Sony CEA	●●●◖	62
Wild Wild Racing	Interplay	●●●	39
Winback	Koei	●●●●	43
Wipeout Fusion	Bam	●●●●◖	57
Wizardry: Tale of the Forsaken Land	Atlus	●●●	53
Woody Woodpecker: Buzz Buzzard Park	DreamCatcher	●●●	57
⚡World Championship Poker	Crave	●◖	90
⚡World Championship Pool 2004	Jaleco	●●●◖	76
World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks	3DO	●●●	42
World of Outlaws: Sprint Cars	Infogrames	●●●●	55
World Series Baseball 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●	67
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 6 Int'l	**Konami**	●●●●●	**67**
World Soccer: Winning Eleven 7 Int'l	**Konami**	●●●●●	**78**
⚡World Soccer: Winning Eleven 8 Int'l	Konami	●●●●◖	90
World Tour Soccer 2002	Sony CEA	●●●●	53
World Tour Soccer 2003	Sony CEA	●●●●	65
⚡World Tour Soccer 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	80
⚡World Tour Soccer 2006	Gathering	●●	91
Wrath Unleashed	LucasArts	●◖	78
WRC: World Rally Championship	**Bam**	●●●●●	**57**
Wreckless: The Yakuza Missions	Activision	●●	63
WTA Tour Tennis	Konami	●	57
WWE Crush Hour	THQ	●●◖	68
WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain	**THQ**	●●●◖	**76**
WWE SmackDown! Just Bring It	**THQ**	●●●◖	**52**
WWE SmackDown! Shut Your Mouth	**THQ**	●●◖	**64**
⚡WWE SmackDown! vs. Raw	THQ	●●●◖	88
X Squad	EA Games	●●●◖	38
The X-Files: Resist or Serve	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	81
X-Men Legends	Activision	●●●●	87
X-Men: Next Dimension	Activision	●●●	64
X2: Wolverine's Revenge	Activision	●●●	69
Xenosaga Episode I: DWZM	Namco	●●●●	66
Xenosaga Episode II: JVGUB	Namco	●●●◖	90
XGRA: Extreme-G Racing Association	Acclaim	●●●●◖	74
⚡XIII	Ubisoft	●●●◖	75
Yanya Caballista: City Skater	Koei	●●●◖	49
Ys VI: The Art of Napishtim	Konami	●●●◖	90
Yu-Gi-Oh! The Duelists of the Roses	Konami	●●◖	67
Yu-Gi-Oh! Capsule Monster Coliseum	Konami	●●●	88
Yu Yu Hakusho: Dark Tournament	Atari	●●◖	88
Zapper	Infogrames	●●◖	64
ZOE: Zone of the Enders	Konami	●●●●◖	44
Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	Konami	●●●●◖	68



READER REVIEWS

GRAN DESIGNS

GRAN TURISMO 4

WHAT YOU SAID

"I have been a loyal fan of *Gran Turismo* since the beginning. I got the first game on the first day, and through me literally hundreds of people have experienced [the game] and bought their own copies. I own all four *Gran Turismos*—with three memory cards dedicated to *GT3*—and preordered *GT4* over three years ago, such is my dedication. I am SO disappointed in *GT4*. The developers took away all the freedom and sucked the fun right out of the game. The races feel more like a chore than fun. In the quest for realism, they have ruined what fun the game once had—the whole tire-changing thing is just annoying. The two-player mode contains the most evidence of the game's incompletion: splitscreen replay? Are we back in 1994?

"Where's my option for one solid replay? Why can't I save my replay in two-player mode? Why give us cars we can't compete with? The racing is solid, but the options I need to enjoy these races are missing. The game is unfinished; even the menu screens feel rushed. I love *GT*, but I would have waited another year for them to get it right."

[●●●◖○]

Nigel

WHAT WE SAID

"*GT4* is the best driving sim ever, bar none."

[●●●●●]

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

WHAT YOU SAID

"The game is literally massive in size and scope. The main story line never loses its grip on you; it seems to pay homage to John Singleton movies at some points, then veers over into *Ocean's Eleven* territory, all without skipping a beat. The missions are varied and interesting, although having to start over again in some of the racing missions is more than a little annoying.

"The graphics suffer from the occasional bit of pop-up and I had a couple of collision-detection issues, but the gameplay controls are tight: I found the weapons easier to aim this time out. The voice talent is uniformly excellent and Young Maylay is a standout. There are some big-budget names in the mix but none of them phoned in their roles; on the contrary, Samuel L. Jackson seems to be having a blast as the crooked cop, Officer Tenpenny.

"Once again, though, Rockstar grabs morality by the short and curlies. If you are offended by over-the-top violence, violence against women, violence against the police, violence against soft-drink machines...you get the idea...then this is not your game.

"All in all, it is a watershed game. You can skydive, race cars, break and enter, and drive taxis, ambulances, and police cars—and I've still only scratched the surface. So put your real life on hold for a while and begin your virtual life of crime."

[●●●●●]

Langdon Alger

WHAT WE SAID

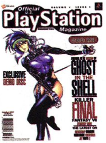
"It's spectacular—it sets the bar so high that it leaves a lot of games in the dust."

[●●●●●]

REWIND

OPM THROUGH THE YEARS

GET THIS:
OPM is just eight issues away from No. 100. Hard to believe, isn't it? Time flies when you're having fun and all that. In any event, to commemorate the momentous occasion we thought we'd take a trip way, way back in time, and take you all on a jaunt through *OPM*'s almost eight-year history, 11 issues at a time.


Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Ghost in the Shell
Exclusive Demo Disc
Killer Final Fantasy VII

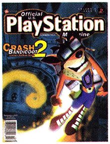
ISSUE #1: OCTOBER 1997

Cover story: *Ghost in the Shell*
Reviewed: *Final Fantasy VII* (5/5), *Abe's Oddysee* (4/5)
Previewed: *Nightmare Creatures, Jet Moto 2*
Demoed: *PaRappa the Rapper, Ace Combat 2*
Most embarrassing moment: A "live-action comic" starring three editors, which coincided with a preview for the horrible fighting game *Vs.* Never, ever again.

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
PaRappa the Rapper

ISSUE #2: NOVEMBER 1997

Cover story: *PaRappa the Rapper*
Reviewed: *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* (5/5), *Resident Evil Director's Cut* (3/5)
Previewed: *Crash Bandicoot 2, Resident Evil 2, Tomb Raider II*
Demoed: *Crash Bandicoot 2, Colony Wars*
Most amusing understatement in an import preview: "*Gran Turismo* appears to excel both in realism and gameplay."


Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Crash Bandicoot 2

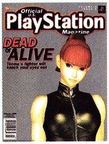
ISSUE #3: DECEMBER 1997

Cover story: *Crash 2: Cortex Strikes Back*
Reviewed: *Crash 2* (4/5), *MK Mythologies* (2.5/5)
Previewed: *Duke Nukem, Spawn: The Eternal*
Demoed: *Star Wars: Masters of Teräs Käsi*
Most embarrassing moment: Capcom admits that the "uncensored" *Resident Evil Director's Cut* was actually heavily censored due to an overlooked error in the publication approval process and offers refunds all around.

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Resident Evil 2

ISSUE #4: JANUARY 1998

Cover story: *Resident Evil 2*
Reviewed: *Tomb Raider II* (4.5/5), *Star Wars: Masters of Teräs Käsi* (3/5)
Previewed: *Klonoa, Vigilante 8*
Demoed: *NFL GameDay 98, Frogger*
Biggest preview of a soon-to-be-canceled game: Two pages on *Elric*, based on the writings of fantasy author Michael Moorcock, which quickly faded into oblivion.


Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Dead or Alive
Tecmo's fighter will knock your eyes out

ISSUE #5: FEBRUARY 1998

Cover story: *Dead or Alive*
Reviewed: *Final Fantasy Tactics* (4/5), *Duke Nukem: Total Meltdown* (3/5)
Previewed: *Tekken 3, Need for Speed III*
Demoed: *Tomb Raider II*
Most embarrassing moments: A printing error erases random bits of the magazine; that god-awful cover; and the horrible cover line, "Tecmo's fighter will knock your eyes out."

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Final Fantasy Tactics

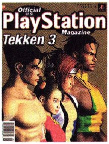
ISSUE #6: MARCH 1998

Cover story: *Final Fantasy Tactics*
Reviewed: *Resident Evil 2* (5/5), *Klonoa* (5/5)
Previewed: *Gran Turismo, Grand Theft Auto*
Demoed: *Bloody Roar, Monster Rancher*
Most prescient quote: "*Grand Theft Auto* could prove to be a sort of censorship litmus test." Honestly, though, we had no idea just how far it would go.

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Vigilante 8

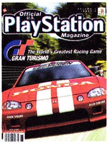
ISSUE #7: APRIL 1998

Cover story: *Vigilante 8*
Reviewed: *Hot Shots Golf* (4/5), *Gex: Enter the Gecko* (3.5/5)
Previewed: *Tomba!, Blasto*
Demoed: *Hot Shots Golf, Pitfall 3D*
Most uncomfortably optimistic preview quote: "SCEA has pushed back *Blasto*'s release date a couple of times to insure the game will really be something special."


Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Tekken 3

ISSUE #8: MAY 1998

Cover story: *Tekken 3*
Reviewed: *Blasto* (3.5/5), *Dead or Alive* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver, Batman and Robin*
Demoed: *Klonoa, Einhänder*
Most unfortunate headline for a news item about Tiger Woods: "Catching a Tiger by its Tail," in reference to his signing on to do golf games for EA.


Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
The World's Greatest Racing Game
Gran Turismo

ISSUE #9: JUNE 1998

Cover story: *Gran Turismo*
Reviewed: *Gran Turismo* (5/5), *Tekken 3* (5/5)
Previewed: *Metal Gear Solid, Parasite Eve*
Demoed: *Vigilante 8, Dead or Alive*
Best sign of the times: A news item celebrating the fact that Sony had sold 10 million PlayStations worldwide. (The number is now well in excess of 100 million.)

Final Fantasy VIII - First Pics & Preview
Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver

ISSUE #10: JULY 1998

Cover story: *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*
Reviewed: *Grand Theft Auto* (2.5/5), *Vigilante 8* (4/5)
Previewed: *Syphon Filter, Spyro the Dragon*
Demoed: *Gran Turismo, Tomba!*
Best art choice: John Madden's head on Cloud's body, for a story about the (short-lived) formation of Square Electronic Arts.

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine
Metal Gear Solid

ISSUE #11: AUGUST 1998

Cover story: *Metal Gear Solid*
Reviewed: *Mortal Kombat 4* (3.5/5), *Tomba!* (4/5)
Previewed: *Silent Hill, Tomb Raider III*
Demoed: *Tekken 3*
Most entertaining quote: "Attaching a camera so you can take a picture of your friends... detracts from what the PlayStation experience is all about." —Kaz Hirai, then COO of Sony CEA

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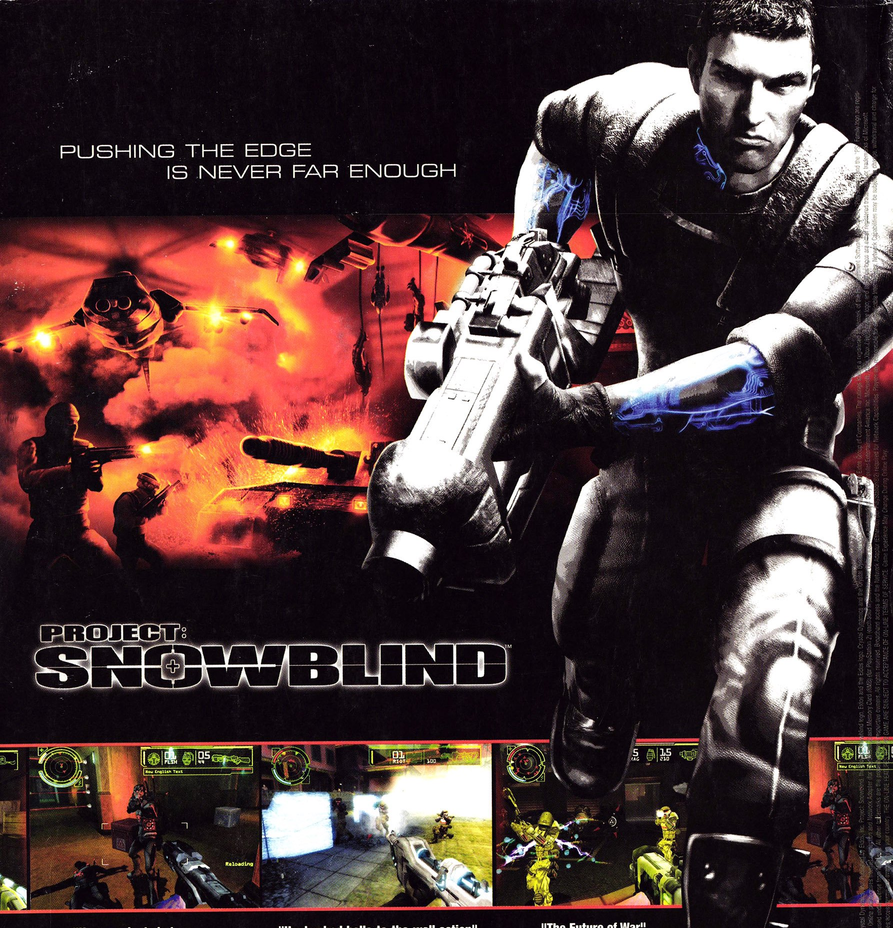

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